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LEBANESE POP STAR DANCES FOR A CAUSE

HIGH FASHION

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EKATERINA ASTASHENKOVA

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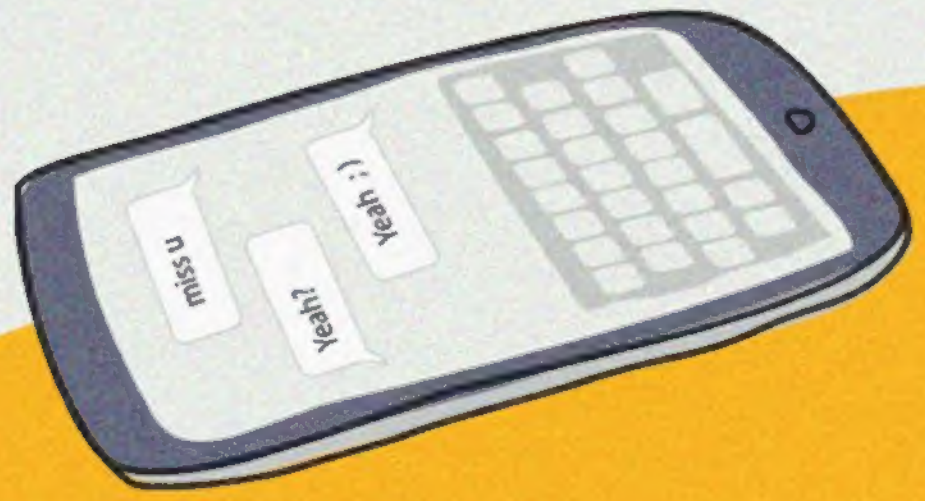
The Blight of the Boomerang Boo



COURTESY **DRAFTFOLIO**

The loneliness and uncertainty of quarantine might have some of you itching to text that ex; here's why you shouldn't

BY **JENNIFER STAVROS**

"Are you up?"

In the age of COVID-19, the reality of being alone is coming to the surface for all of us. Those missed connections that quickly faded into the recesses of our memories suddenly evoke warmer times. And we want warmer times. We want familiarity. We want to text that ex and forget about the disasters outside. Quarantine has brought about an era of "boomerang boos" on hyperdrive.

It's one a.m. Thirty minutes have passed since I sent the above message to a man I've had an ongoing semi-casual romantic relationship with for nearly two years. Every time things nearly develop beyond that, something comes between us. It's been a few weeks since we last spoke; as he's done many times before, he said he wouldn't speak to me again.

My heart sinks a bit when I look at my phone — staring, waiting for a reply. As my anxiety builds, I text again. We've been through this several times, but this time is different. It's more pressing. He's close and, well, he has cannabis.

"Hey, I know that you're likely mad at me but…."

He probably won't answer. Deep down I sense it's for the best, though it doesn't feel that way right now. Maybe he hasn't felt the crunch of corona yet or doesn't know I'm now talking to someone else. Either way, if the world doesn't end, history indicates I'll likely hear from him again. He's the ultimate boomerang boo anyway.

As I scroll through the litany of Facebook posts, noting the news, I see a different ex from a long time past. This was an ex I nearly moved cross-country for, someone who called himself my "biggest fan." He'd been wonderful before.

And right now "before" seems to be the focus. If there was a time before the world was upended, then there will have to be an after. But what if there's not? What if this is all there is? What if this is all there could be?

Now that I'm on Facebook I see a message pop up. It's a video call. This is with yet another ex—one whose exit was on better terms.

"How are you holding up over there?" he says. "I miss you."

These messages have been arriving in waves. It's remarkable. Some of them, like this last one, are tremendously welcome. Others are aggressive and outright nasty, but they almost all return to some strange nostalgia for our familiarity. It's almost as if there's an unspoken contract authorizing this behavior no matter the previous exit.

"I'm not sure why you called just now, but were you wanting me to hang out?" I ask.

"Of course I was," he responds.

The possibility of the world ending seems to be bringing folks out of the woodwork more than usual. It's the ghosts of my past. It's heightening the urge to resurface old connections.

At three a.m. messages are still coming and going. Each one brings a rush of adrenaline. There's a lot of dust blowing around, some of it over a decade old. It's once again fresh, vibrant and exciting. But are any of these reignited flames real, or is this happening only because of the loneliness coronavirus has wrought?

At three a.m. messages are still coming and going. There's a lot of dust blowing around, some of it over a decade old.

My feeds confirm that I'm not the only one noticing this blast from the past. Several others are voicing similar sentiments. I'm not alone, though the social distance makes it seem that way.

I try making it into a game.

"I just had a videoconference playing an online game with two of my exes," I tell my friends. "How many do you think I could get in one chat room before the virus is gone? Do you think this could be a new sport?"

It's comical, after all, isn't it?

Outside the public eye, I find myself looking at the calendar as the days drop off. I find myself aching for things I perhaps took for granted. I find myself missing the warmth and sentiment of a hug and the intoxicating tenderness of touch.

Desire is a drug, and I'm an addict without my fix. And that's when the sexts start, sometimes to folks who perhaps shouldn't receive them. A typical exchange:

"I just want my hair pulled and to be taken. I just want to feel desired and to be desired."

The reply: "Why are you so far away right now? You should be right here on my dick."

Me again: "Oh, how I want to be so much right now."

But is any of this sexting healthy? I sit and wonder before, after and, sometimes, to my horror, during. I'm honestly not always sure. If a given relationship's end was known to be unhealthy, I'm fully aware that the sexting isn't healthy either. But no one wants to think about that; it's much easier to pretend a global health crisis wipes the slate clean. It's easier to be in this moment and feel anything other than the heat of our current hellscape.

Should we distance ourselves from our emotions to comply with the quarantine?

When you're thinking about texting that boomerang boo, I encourage you not to do as I do but, dear loves, to take a deep breath and press pause. It's tempting to get caught up in long-forgotten patterns as a form of distraction. Hope can be entrancing with its power to take hold and dominate the senses. It's a phantom in the night. But perhaps it shouldn't be.

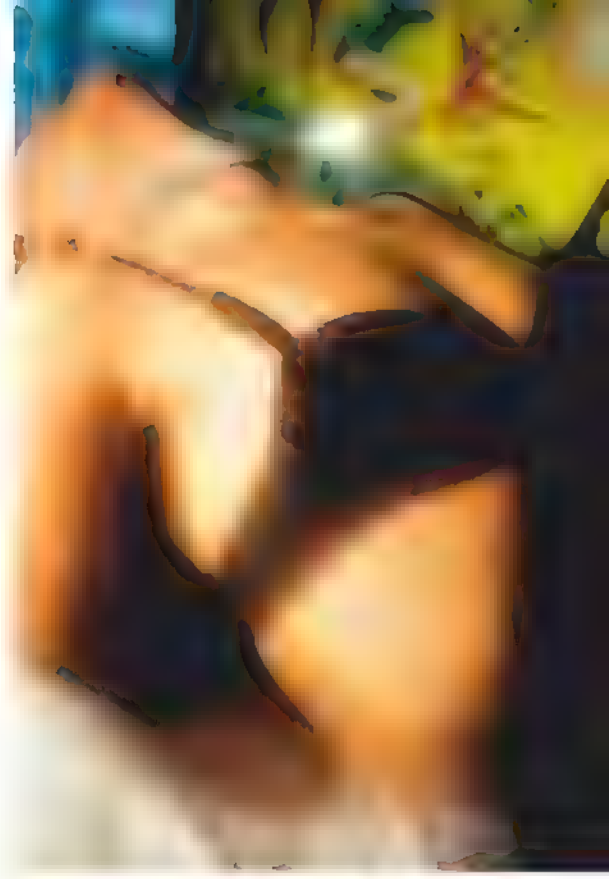
The truth is, the dysfunction or incompatibility never actually went away, even if it seems distant now. There's always a reason things died in the first place. The time we're forced to spend alone can be an opportunity to meditate, reflect and maybe finally give a proper good-bye to the past that always creeps up when we're at our most vulnerable.

There's no need to be haunted by ghosts. The world is scary enough already.

MEET THE LEBANESE POP ARTIST PROVING THAT

Pole-Dancing and *Protest* Go Hand in Hand

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **HADI AFFIF**



From the heart of a diverse, youth-led revolution, Blu Fiefer sings truth to power

BY **KEVIN KNODELL**
KIMBERLY WESTENHISER

It's a chilly December evening, and Blu Fiefer is sitting in a dim, sparsely populated cocktail bar in Beirut's trendy Mar Mikhael neighborhood. Recent economic upheavals have reduced an otherwise thriving nightlife scene to relative quiet—a situation that started well before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We've all been victims of Lebanon's violent history and the bitter taste it has left in everyone's mouth," says the Lebanese pop artist, reflecting on the wave of popular protest that began last year and the vicious civil war that preceded it. "When the revolution started, the main comment you would hear was 'We don't want another civil war.'"

Fiefer is wearing a turtleneck sweater under an army camouflage jacket. Her fingers are tattooed, adorned with rings and crowned with long, darkly painted nails. She speaks with a latent intensity, but she's approachable and radiates generosity.

The country she calls home is situated between Israel and Syria, and conflicts from both often spill across its borders. Refugees account for almost a quarter of its population. The civil war stretched from 1975 to 1990, pitting religious communities against one another as a mix of militia groups aligned with different factions split the country. Upward of 120,000 people were killed; thousands remain displaced. To this day it occasionally endures flare-ups in political violence.

But Lebanon, and particularly its capital of Beirut, is also known for its raucous nightlife, progressive attitudes and vibrant arts community. Its bars, clubs and performance venues are legendary across the region.

Last fall, the country's wild party culture and rough-and-tumble politics collided. An ailing economy, endemic corruption, cuts in services and rising taxes prompted millions of Lebanese people to take to the streets. It quickly became a broad youth-led movement as protesters chanted demands for sweeping societal, cultural and political change.

The atmosphere of the protests was a far cry from those happening in other parts of the world: Demonstrators shared public displays of affection, sang, danced and cheered as DJs blasted their sets into the night. Musicians performed on makeshift stages. Expats joked that the protests were better than Coachella.

Fiefer was one of many Lebanese artists who participated, performing in front of a massive crowd of protesters in Beirut. Her set was live-streamed across the country.

Like Lebanon itself, Fiefer's life has been defined by constant transformation.

Born in Mexico to Lebanese and Mexican parents, Fiefer has traveled widely but calls Beirut home. She's reluctant to categorize her music under a single genre, settling on "alternative hip-hop"; to outside ears it's heavily infused with soul, pop and even classical influences. Most of her songs are in English; as she followed her expat father around the globe, it was the language she tended to speak growing up.

Not content with just singing and writing music, Fiefer is an accomplished producer and director with a passion for pole dancing, which she has incorporated into her act for the past three years, having first explored it while studying music in England. It has become one of her favorite performance elements.

"It's a lot of adrenaline. It's very exciting to do, especially here in Lebanon, and it's interesting to have that conversation with the audience," she says.

Initially she didn't know how the pole-dancing part of her shows would be received, but Lebanese audiences have embraced it. "My specific audience is quite geared toward an open-minded community. I know there's a strong possibility I'll do it in front of the wrong crowd and it will go sour, and I'm prepared for that day."

Pole dancing has become more mainstream as women and enthusiasts of other genders embrace it for fitness. Fiefer is part of a wider community of Lebanese people who have taken it up both for exercise and for artistic expression. But here and elsewhere some get defensive when their hobby is associated with sex work.

"I don't mind exposing myself in that way or wearing high heels on stage while I'm pole dancing, or calling myself a stripper because I don't think it's a bad thing," says Fiefer. "I think you need to have respect for where it came from and how it got popular, and on the backs of whom. It's okay if you don't want to be a stripper, but show respect."

Those conversations are particularly thorny in Lebanon. In the cultural and artistic landscape of the Arab world, contradictions are common: The Middle East is in many ways deeply conservative, but it also has a history of presenting female artists as

objects of desire, which Fiefer believes has made some independent Arab artists hesitant to put those themes front and center as they try to differentiate themselves.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with sexualizing Arab pop; I think the problem is that's all we've had," Fiefer says. "A lot of people would say I've capitalized on my sexuality and my image in my shows. The thing with me is it's just who I am. The whole idea is there's nothing wrong with being sexual. If I want to be sexual on stage I can, and if one day I decide I don't feel like it, I can. It's just the right of having that choice."

For Arab women, pushing sexual boundaries can invite intense scrutiny. The Lebanese government launched an investigation of Olympic skier Jackie Chamoun after outtakes from a calendar photo shoot leaked online showing her topless and wearing a G-string. The brief porn career that made Lebanese-born Mia Khalifa a global sensation also caused a stir in the country as newspapers condemned her for supposedly dishonoring her heritage.

Fiefer herself has occasionally been a target of criticism and she's never been shy about facing it head-on. At the age of 17, when she performed under the stage name Poly, she appeared on a Lebanese talk show wearing a necklace of condoms as she defiantly advocated for safe sex and LGBTQIA+ rights in the face of a scolding male host. But during the fall and winter of 2019 women in the revolution began chanting against sexual assault and talking about consent.

"I didn't think it would come so soon, actually," says Fiefer. "I think it's a conversation we all have when we're out, when we're having a drink, when we're at home together, but it's not a conversation we have so publicly, on TV or in the streets. So if the revolution stops today, this is a huge milestone."

Women have played a very visible role in the protests across Lebanon. In the beginning, some handed flowers and gave hugs to soldiers and riot police—though others were photographed fighting back when authorities and paramilitaries tried to attack them. As the situation in the streets has become more hostile, women have responded accordingly.

Some Western media outlets treated the participation of women in the protests as an anomaly. But to Fiefer it was obvious women would be central to an Arab revolution.

"A lot of people don't really know much about the Middle East, let alone its women," she says. "I think historically women have been in positions of power but always behind someone, always behind the man. I think with the new generation you're seeing women in roles you haven't specifically seen them in before. It's sparking inspiration in people to be less apologetic and submit less to a certain stereotype."

"It's a beautiful idea; Lebanon is a beautiful idea."

Politicians and businessmen have looted Lebanon's banks to fill offshore accounts; today many Lebanese can't access more than a small amount of their own money. Many of the country's once beautiful beaches are now landfills, and the ones that aren't have been privatized by the ultra wealthy. Last year wildfires destroyed world-famous cedar forests while the government made a lackluster firefighting effort. Meanwhile businesses across the country are closing, taxes are rising and nobody knows where their money is going.

When the protests began, artists sought to inspire revolutionary fervor through songs, paintings, graffiti and other media. For Fiefer, this proved to be a creative challenge. "It was actually quite difficult in the first month," she says. "I couldn't even listen to music. Everything felt so superficial. I couldn't relate to anything I would usually listen to because now I'm talking about basic necessities, about country, about life, about the future."

Fiefer's performance before the crowd in Beirut struck a chord. She got requests to do a cross-country "Revolution Tour." The tour never happened, but it wasn't long before DJs in other cities started remixing the audio of her performance for protesters in their communities.

Fans tell her she could enjoy greater success beyond Lebanon's borders. She has considered it: Her Mexican passport allows her to travel with greater ease than a Lebanese passport holder. "It's extremely difficult to make it here. It's extremely difficult to live here, yet everyone who leaves is nostalgic to come back," she says. "All the Lebanese who leave become even more Lebanese abroad than they are here."

She pauses before adding, "It's a beautiful idea; Lebanon is a beautiful idea."

Lately Fiefer has been writing more songs in Arabic; she performed one at the protests. She admits she never thought Arabic would become an important part of her music. It was something she associated with the oppression and war her family had tried to leave behind.

"As I get older I'm redefining what it means to me, and the people around me are redefining what it means to me," she says. "It doesn't mean what I used to fear it meant. I can make it what I want."

Fiefer also wants to use more Spanish in her work, to pay tribute to the Mexican side of her family. "I've always felt very lost. When I'm in Mexico I'm a foreigner; when I'm in Lebanon I'm a foreigner," she says. "There are millions of people around the world who feel the same because they had to leave where they're from, and I think I have a connection with those people."

In many ways she's still working out how to reconcile activism, citizenship and class consciousness with her own creative journey. "Being extravagant as I usually am feels insensitive, because I've been on the streets and I've seen how much people have," she says. "I'm not from a wealthy family, but I know the impression I might give out. I'm finding it very difficult to exist right now.

"It took me a good 40 days to put my rings back on," she adds, flashing her fingers. "And they're not even real diamonds—but it just didn't feel right in the beginning. Hopefully I'll get to a point soon where I can feel comfortable as both a citizen and an artist."

When the pandemic struck the Middle East, Fiefer had to make the difficult decision to cancel upcoming shows and start urging fans to stay home.

Prior to COVID-19's arrival in the region, divisions had started to show among the protesters. Activists accused the various political factions of trying to divide them and incite conflict. The economic collapse and rampant unemployment led to a rash of suicides last year. Many Lebanese political leaders seemed to hope they could wait out the protests—that a combination of time and inclement weather would eventually cause the protesters to tire and give up. But the country's economy continued to tank, and Lebanese people stayed angry.

Sporadic clashes between Lebanese citizens and authorities

have already resumed as people on both sides struggle to pay for food and basic goods. Some activists have called for comrades in possession of masks and gloves to return to the streets, practicing social distancing while standing firm on their social and political demands.

"If things stop being peaceful, it's not our fault at all," says Fiefer. "If things go sour, you're asking for it, because you're giving people no choice."

When people do leave their homes again, they likely won't accept a return to business as usual.

"The fact that people made us feel like our demands might be attainable has been very dangerous to the power," Fiefer says. "There's no going back." ■

Model **@MISS__FOXX1**

Photography by **MIKE COHEN | @MIKECOHENPHOTOS**
MUA **@ANDREWSAINTANDREW**
PR **LSA PUBLICATIONS | @LEO.ALDERMAN @LSAPUBLICATIONS**

Tell us something surprising about you?
I like to drive fast cars with big engines ;)

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Yes it's been one of my dreams to shoot for Playboy.

What inspires you?
I'm always inspired by people who have made everything they have from the bottom with no help. Just hard work, dedication and passion.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?
I have always taken sexy photos of myself from been a teen it always puts a smile on my face. And to take it up professionally is my perfect job.

Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?
I always looked up to Beyoncé angelina joli, kim kardashian these are very beautiful but smart females.

What are some of your hobbies?
My hobbies are travelling keeping fit, and dressing up taking naughty photos of myself

Name three things on your bucket list?
Become a property developer
Travel the world
Have my own family

Turn-ons
Clean, tall, dark & handsome, positive energy

Turn-offs
negative energy, unclean

Describe to us your perfect date
On a blanket in the countryside just the two of us in the middle of nowhere :)

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
Japan just because it's a completely different lifestyle and culture I'd like to experience it

What is your mantra?
Go for it!

Playboy Interview

Dennis Rodman

A candid conversation with the NBA's boa-clad bad boy about rebounding, oral sex, lap dances, kicking that cameraman and how, deep down, he's really a very shy man

INTERVIEW BY **KEVIN COOK** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BILL SMITH**

"This will be your most difficult interview ever." So said a friend who has prowled a few nights with the Chicago Bulls' freaky forward. Three days later we agreed that hanging with Dennis Rodman, discussing his public and private self in hotel rooms, casinos and nightclubs, was difficult at times—times like sunup, for instance. It was also rewarding in unexpected ways.

Our weekend with Rodman began with a visit to his agent, Dwight Manley, one of the real-life models for Tom Cruise's character in Jerry Maguire. Yes, Manley said, Dennis liked the idea of doing PLAYBOY. And since he was serving an 11-game suspension for kicking a cameraman, he had some free time. But there would be ground rules. m"Not rules so much as ways of approaching Dennis," said Manley, as if he were discussing nitroglycerin. In the end, however, the Rodman rules were simple. First, Dennis does only and exactly what he wants. Might talk, might not. Meet him for dinner, hit a few nightclubs. If he offers to buy you a lap dance, you're in.

Erratic? Expensive? Extremely, but any difficulty was a small price for quality time with the only cross-dressing, nose- and scrotum-pierced, best-selling millionaire author we know.

Rodman was born 36 years ago and grew up in the Oak Cliff projects of south Dallas. His father, Philander Rodman, abandoned the family when Dennis was three. Philander eventually moved to the Philippines, where he claims to have fathered 27 children. Dennis grew up with his disapproving mother, Shirley, and two younger sisters, Debra and Kim, who both played basketball better than he did. The girls became college all-Americans, while their big brother became a janitor and a thief.

After Shirley kicked her bad boy out of the house, Rodman was homeless. At 20 he was pushing a broom on the graveyard shift at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. One night he used a broom handle to pilfer 50 watches from a closed gift shop. He was jailed overnight and fired. Rodman hit bottom, then rebounded in a big way. He had grown almost 12 inches in a year. The clumsy high schooler who had never played a varsity game was now a force in neighborhood pickup games. Still, his coming-out party flopped. While averaging 17 points and 13 rebounds for Cooke County Junior College, Rodman flunked out.

Fortunately for today's Bulls fans, as well as for MTV and the feather boa industry, an assistant coach at tiny Southeastern Oklahoma State University saw Rodman play that year. Soon Dennis was a hoops hero in Durant, Oklahoma.

From 1984 to 1986 he averaged 26 points and 15.6 rebounds for the Southeastern Oklahoma State Savages. Rodman was a three-time NAIA all-American. Still, he says he was p"a lost soul." Durant had a population of 6000. It was 5999 white folks and him. Fortunately a local family had taken him in. James Rich, a mailman, his wife, Pat, and their 13-year-old son, Bryne, virtually adopted Rodman. Bryne, who had accidentally shot and killed his best friend on a hunting trip, had terrible nightmares and needed a friend. Dennis, at 22, needed a family. On his first night in the Rich home he left the couch and slept on a trundle bed in Bryne's room.

Soon Rodman was milking cows and feeding chickens. Though he loved his foster family, he couldn't escape outsider status. The Riches tried to accept their friend Worm (a nickname for the way he wiggled playing video games). Yet there was evil gossip in town. It got so bad that Pat was reluctant to go out in public with Dennis. Eventually they became a functional family, and the Riches filled a gap in Rodman's life between the projects and the NBA, where he finally found the father he had been looking for.

In 1986 Detroit Pistons coach Chuck Daly risked the 27th pick of the NBA draft on the skinny no-name who became, at 25, the oldest rookie in the league. During the next two seasons Daly, a man Rodman almost worshiped, eased Dennis past All-Star Adrian Dantley into the starting lineup for the famed Bad Boy Pistons. In the 1988-1989 season, Rodman averaged 9.4 rebounds and Detroit swept the Lakers for the NBA title.

Detroit won another championship the next season. Rodman was the league's defensive player of the year. He would soon lead the NBA in rebounding year after year; his 1991-1992 average of 18.7 rebounds was the best since Wilt Chamberlain led the league two decades earlier. But by 1993 Detroit's title team was dismantled and Daly was eased out—betrayed by the club, Rodman thought.

One day that year, Detroit police found Rodman in his pickup truck at dawn. He had a loaded rifle next to him and said that he was contemplating suicide. Before long he had been traded to San Antonio, where his colorful mean streak started making news.

It was in Texas that Rodman started dyeing his hair. Next came tattoos and piercing, and he began making borderline nutty statements. The man who didn't play much offense started giving plenty. He belittled Spurs coach Bob Hill, calling him Boner. He also expressed contempt for Spurs hero David Robinson, publicly questioning Robinson's guts. He refused to help Robinson on defense and turned his back on team huddles. He started going AWOL. Rodman won the rebounding title both years in San Antonio, but in 1995 the Spurs gladly traded him to Chicago for Will Perdue

That deal had a notable sidelight. Bulls stars Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen have veto power on trades, but both agreed to welcome Rodman to Chicago. Though they remembered the 1991 playoffs, when Rodman shoved Pippen into the stands (leaving Pippen with a nasty gash on his face and Rodman with a $5000 fine), the Bulls' scorers wanted the game's best rebounder on their side

"Look, I have sex a lot. Sometimes it's just going through the motions. I've faked."

Today, Pippen's chin bears the scar of Rodman's cheap shot. And Jordan can barely conceal his irritation with the Bulls' antic antihero. Yet with all three of them in the lineup, there is little doubt the Bulls are the best team the game has ever seen.

Meanwhile, Rodman transcends his craft. It was news last year when Sports Illustrated suggested that he might be the best rebounder of all time. Wilt Chamberlain has disagreed. In turn, Rodman has challenged Wilt by attacking a statistic that means as much to both men as rebounds: sexual conquests.

When the Stilt boasted of having had sex with 20,000 women, Rodman wrote in his best-seller, Bad As I Wanna Be, that m"Wilt Chamberlain lied out of his ass." That was one of many naughty bits in the book that made the tattooed cross-dresser a crossover superstar. He also quoted Madonna's pillow talk: "Are you going to eat my pussy first?" and "I want every drop of your come inside me."

Then he acted hurt when she called him p"disgusting."

Rodman is good at acting hurt. His book portrays him as something of an all-purpose victim: Nobody understands him, everybody wants a piece of him. And while some of his poor-Dennis pose is mere marketing would anyone feel sorry for a happy millionaire? his gripes sound sincere when you meet him.

For all his fame and his millions, Rodman carries a big chip on his tattooed shoulder. Yes, he has a big-budget action movie, Double Team, in theaters near you. He has his own show on MTV. He has a new book, Walk on the Wild Side, out to explain his innermost thoughts. Yet he insists that he is misunderstood. Maybe that's

what makes Dennis Rodman the most postmodern celeb of them all. He is everywhere, emptily. He is in your face in movies, TV, bookstores, video games, action figures and virtual reality, but he says you don't really know him.

We sent Contributing Editor Kevin Cook to Las Vegas to get to know Rodman. He was joined by well-known Chicago businessman Bill Marovitz, who assisted Cook both as an interviewer and as a guide on some unique Rodmanesque adventures. Cook reports:

"We met in Las Vegas, where the scenery matches Rodman's hair. I arrived at the Mirage Hotel and Casino, his Vegas headquarters, with time to spare, In fact, since it took Rodman about 28 hours to show up for our first talk, I had time to prepare a long list of questions.

"Those questions wound up on a disco floor somewhere. My first night with Dennis taught me that lists are useless with this guy. He may be the most nonlinear man I've ever met. You don't need questions to talk with Dennis Rodman. Benzedrine, maybe. One does not sit with him. Instead you chase him, ride in limos and watch topless dancers with him, keep changing the subject until a topic sparks his interest. Going into this interview I expected him to be surly, but at two a.m., even after a few drinks, he was bright-eyed and funny, with a knack for metaphor that startled me.

"I don't give a fuck about anybody in the NBA. Hanging with Michael Jordan is supposed to be big news? Please."

"After a day of waiting I had hooked up with his crew for a ten p.m. dinner at the Mirage. Ten p.m. is the beginning of late for me, but for Rodman it's the dawn of a night he intends to grab and squeeze like a stray rebound. That night, fresh off a standing ovation on Jay Leno's Tonight Show, Rodman strode through the Mirage in furry tiger-striped pants and a leather shirt that showed off his muscled chest. His hair was the color of a lemon-lime Lava lamp. He lifted an eyebrow when his agent announced that I was there to do the Dennis Rodman Playboy Interview. Rodman's expression said, We'll see about that.

"During the next three days I would sleep a total of five hours. I would get to know the Rodman group, featuring Manley as well as Dennis' weekend girlfriend. And wise Wendell Williams, Rodman's 280-pound bodyguard, gave me the first quote I wrote down: p'Dennis isn't crazy. Dennis is free.'

"Rodman is no ordinary chat. I didn't so much converse with him as step into his stream of consciousness.

"We began in his limo, zooming past the giant fountain at Caesars Palace."

RODMAN: Evel Knievel jumped a motorcycle over this fountain. That was so cool.
PLAYBOY: Is that your idea of celebrity?
RODMAN: You know how I see it? Not to be bigheaded, but shit, you can put me up there with Jim Morrison, fucking goddamn Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin.
PLAYBOY: They're all dead.
RODMAN: They say Elvis is dead. I say, no, you're looking at him. Elvis isn't dead, he just changed color.
PLAYBOY: You're in Chicago Bulls colors tonight—a floor-length red jacket and black shirt.
RODMAN: No. This coat is not red. It's hot pink. I am a multicolored individual. A different color every day. They call me the Worm, but that's wrong. I'm the fucking chameleon.
PLAYBOY: Why is America paying you so much attention?
RODMAN: I give them a little thrill, all the people who forgot that life is fun. It's like The Phantom of the Opera—it might scare them, but they like it. But it's just a fad. I'm a fad. I am on fire right now, dude, but it won't last forever.
PLAYBOY: Are you more comfortable in public or in private?
RODMAN: Public.

[As his entourage streamed through the casino at the Rio Suite Hotel, all eyes followed the towering, pink-coated Rodman. Whether he was gambling or on the move, his only protection was bodyguard Williams, who gently turned away autograph seekers. One girl got to Dennis by pleading, actually going to one knee as she cried, m"Please! It's my bachelorette party." With a nod to his bodyguard "It's OK"—Rodman allowed the girl to kiss him, and she raced down an aisle of slot machines, yelling, "I kissed Dennis Rodman! I kissed Dennis Rodman!"

We sat in Club Rio at a table soon littered with empty shot glasses and beer bottles. The star seemed momentarily bored. There were two autograph hunters nearby; Rodman pointed to me as if trying to impress them.]

RODMAN: [*To the fans*] No autographs. Doing an interview here.
PLAYBOY: Does all the hubbub ever bother you?
RODMAN: [*Nodding, calling for a round of drinks*] I was in this club and when I went up to dance, everybody stopped dancing They stood there watching me. I sat back down.
PLAYBOY: How do you relax?
RODMAN: Spend time with people who have a good time. The people you see in my limo. Fuckers who are fun. People who P-A-R-T-Y! Why party? Because I can. [He hugs his female companion.] This is fun right here. When you are in Dennis Rodman's clan you celebrate the living of life. So once I'm with people I like, I relax. Because I know there's people out there who want to fuck me.
PLAYBOY: Thousands.
RODMAN: No, I don't mean literally want to fuck me. There are assholes who don't like me.
PLAYBOY: Including the NBA?

RODMAN: I fuck up the NBA image, their whole business enterprise. Because I can express myself as an individual. In their high-society sport, I bring it from the heart.

PLAYBOY: You are known for your court sense—for anticipating what's going to happen next on the floor. Can you do that with trends, too? Did you plan the Rodman fad?

RODMAN: My things are never planned. I visualize, I focus and analyze, but I'm always in the here and now. Once I learned to be myself, to express myself, the rest just happened. And now I'm in the atmosphere. I am the reality. I'm Elvis, Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead all wrapped into one. The president of the United States gets a hard-on just thinking about me.

PLAYBOY: Supposedly that doesn't take much.

RODMAN: His wife was on TV, joking around that she was g"Hillary Rodman Clinton." Now, I always thought you had to have sex with a person before you took his name. So maybe she was thinking about it. I can see them in bed, the president's making love and she's saying, "Oh, oh, Dennis—I mean, Bill!"

PLAYBOY: What else amuses you about your fad?

RODMAN: My life is a circus. My year is 365 days of fucking confusion. But I'm still leading in rebounding, 600-plus rebounds in only 30-some games. Nothing is planned. My life is more addictive. But I love it. I keep Lucifer wondering, What will he do next? Will he really play his last game in the nude?

"I have done a lot for the gay community. I make it more acceptable. I am an entertainer, a phenomenon and a historical landmark."

PLAYBOY: Michael Jordan told us he's against any such thing.

RODMAN: It'll happen. You'll see it.

PLAYBOY: Some people call you the world's weirdest athlete.

RODMAN: I'm not an athlete. Athletes are boring, typical and predictable. I can't even watch them talk on TV. You know, the scene after the game.

PLAYBOY: They're all putting the team first and giving 110 percent.

RODMAN: Save it. The difference between me and athletes is, they want to be athletes. They even want to be coaches when their careers are over. I am above all that. But still, I have my downfall every year. Some little thing blows up on me. A couple years ago I head-butted a ref and got suspended. This year it was kicking that cameraman motherfucker, Eugene Amos.

PLAYBOY: Amos is a courtside photographer. You plowed into him trying to save a loose ball. What made you kick him?

RODMAN: It was a trigger reaction. Can't I have a bad day? It's like you coming home from work. Maybe you've been working hard, focusing hard all day, you come home and your wife sits there bitching about the smallest fucking thing. Something triggers in the brain and you might lash out.

PLAYBOY: Should Amos have been there? In other sports the press isn't allowed to be so close to the action.

RODMAN: We need more room. The cameras they use today can shoot pictures of you from the moon, so why are they right up on the court? I could have broken my leg running into him and his camera. I think they should be at least two or three feet back.

PLAYBOY: Amos dropped charges against you after you paid him a handsome settlement. How did that work? Did you have a meeting?

RODMAN: It was a telephone call. He sounded like a politician. g"Thank you very much," he said, "and God bless." Then I see on the news, just last week—Eugene Amos got arrested for beating his girlfriend.

PLAYBOY: Vindication?

RODMAN: Vindication in a way. It shows you that life has its wacky ways of working out.

PLAYBOY: Maybe Amos should give your $200,000 to his girlfriend.

RODMAN: He should give it back to my ass.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of numbers, you state that Wilt Chamberlain lied when he claimed he'd had sex with 20,000 women. But you have never mentioned your own career total.

RODMAN: In my whole life I have had between 25 and 30 women. Maybe five good ones

PLAYBOY: You wrote in your book that you were still a virgin at 20.

RODMAN: Well, I'm making up for lost time. My hormones run wild like the fever of typhus, baby.

PLAYBOY: Why such a late start?

RODMAN: When you live in the community I was in, with no money, and you're not good-looking. I didn't have shit. Never went to the school prom. I didn't even like girls. Look, when you are just a motherfucking guy in the neighborhood trying to survive, it's not a sexual environment.

PLAYBOY: g"Not good-looking"? Is that what you think when you look in the mirror?

RODMAN: I don't look at mirrors. I'm too fucking ugly

PLAYBOY: We could easily round up 100 women who would jump at the chance to sleep with you tonight.

RODMAN: I just don't like mirrors.

PLAYBOY: Is it true that you were so asexual you didn't masturbate until you were 19?

RODMAN: That's right. But the first time, I was already an expert. Just about jerked the head off it. [He mimes wrestling a fire hose.]

PLAYBOY: You've said you try to be faithful to whomever your current girlfriend may be. If she's not in town you sometimes satisfy yourself. You even gave your hands sexy names.

RODMAN: Monique and Judy. In case I get frustrated and confused, I always know they can help my ass out. If Monique gets tired, turn to Judy.

PLAYBOY: Not everyone is so candid about masturbating.
RODMAN: Masturbation happens 1.6 billion times a day. Every man and woman does it. It's like the wildfires of California, baby, so we may as well say it.
[By now we had changed venues again. We were at a club called Drink and Eat Too. Even louder than the Rio, it was jammed with drinkers, dancers and Rodman-watchers. The watchee stood in a corner behind the bar, which was a step above the floor. From there he peered impassively down at all the faces upturned toward him. We had given up our talk for the night; Drink was too loud. Then Rodman shouted, m"Reporter, reporter!" We were under way again.]
PLAYBOY: You say your goal in life is freedom, being free of society's rules or even those of the NBA. When do you feel free?
RODMAN: Having sex.
PLAYBOY: Tell us more. What do you want in bed?
RODMAN: I want a woman who's free. That means she's independent and desirable. I could use some independence in a woman, too. Usually when I have sex I am in control, I'm dominant, but I'd like some woman to get on top of me and be in control for half an hour, do me for a half hour. Then we'd be even.
PLAYBOY: What makes a man good in bed?
RODMAN: Confidence. He should be confident in his dick. And eat pussy big-time, too. Go down under and have a fucking groundhog for lunch, that's my advice.
PLAYBOY: Yet you wouldn't do that with Madonna.
RODMAN: That was a flash in the past. Can we leave Madonna alone? She's a good woman. I hope she gets what she wants.
PLAYBOY: That was gallant. OK, let's talk about your job. How does today's NBA compare with the league of 10 years ago, when you were a rookie?
RODMAN: It's going downhill. The younger players have a whole different vibe, a different game. Some are big stars before they even play in our league, and right away they want to be more famous. Everyone wants to shoot. Everybody wants to be a big fucking star. But there are only about 20 real stars, and maybe four shining stars, in the league. Maybe one ultimate star.
PLAYBOY: Jordan? Or you?
RODMAN: Who cares? I just rack and roll.
PLAYBOY: You said four shining stars. Name them.
RODMAN: No, you name them. Go ahead. Knock yourself out.
PLAYBOY: Jordan, Shaq, you and Little Penny.
RODMAN: I don't care. I don't like the whole athlete phenomenon.
PLAYBOY: Hasn't it made you rich? Tonight we watched you playing blackjack and craps with $1000 chips. You must have had $30,000 in front of you.
RODMAN: I've got between $25 million and $50 million, and I fucking E.F. Huttoned it, dude. I earned it.
PLAYBOY: You got the money and three championship rings for being a great rebounder, the one who's famous for how much he studies the game. Even your critics say you might have the best court sense since Magic Johnson. Chamberlain was bigger and possibly better, but aren't you the thinkingest rebounder?
RODMAN: I study my craft. I can visualize the court, the ball and the action on the rim all at once. Never the other player. I think the game, not the people in it.
PLAYBOY: When you joined Chicago you spent hours in the gym rebounding for Jordan and Scottie Pippen.
RODMAN: Studying. Programming my mind. I study the people who shoot the ball. The way they like to shoot, where the ball likes to come off when they miss—you get a feel for it. Then when the game starts I can let my mind relax and go into that feel, the flow of the game. It's like rolling dice. Sometimes you get a feel for the dice. You can feel a seven coming. The ball is funny like that; I'll watch the ball even watching a game on TV and know if it's going off to the right or to the left.
PLAYBOY: Do you think teenagers such as Kevin Garnett, Kobe Bryant and Jermaine O'Neal know their craft?
RODMAN: They're not here just because somebody said they were good, are they? They have real talent. They had the feeling, now they have to show us they're that good. I think they can do it, but they haven't yet.
PLAYBOY: Are younger players worth what they're getting paid?
RODMAN: Paying players $90 million is ridiculous. Even $30 million—think of the lifetimes people work to get that much money. If you're going to pay players $90 million, I say they should run the team. Get out of the way. But if you are going to pay this ridiculous money, pay the players who are worth it. Not the ones who haven't done it yet. Pay the ones who win. Pay the ones who are out there giving you 110 percent every night.
PLAYBOY: People might be surprised to hear Dennis Rodman complain about overhyped NBA players.
RODMAN: Fine, but you know what? I am about to do something that has never been done in the history of sport. Before next season I am going to sign a $9 million or $10 million contract and tell the team, g"If I'm not worth it, don't pay me. If I don't play up to that contract, keep the money." I'll play the whole year for free.
PLAYBOY: Do you mean that?
RODMAN: That's right
PLAYBOY: This is a pledge you're making here tonight?
RODMAN: It is. I'm already giving money back. When I come off suspension, I'm giving my pay to charity for the first 11 games. That's a million dollars.
PLAYBOY: Does it sting to be suspended kicked out of the game for a month?
RODMAN: It gave me time to clear my head. Sometimes my life is so fucked up I don't know what's happening to me. I need time.
PLAYBOY: You're no longer part of Nike's ad roster, are you?
RODMAN: So I have no Nike deal. Nike is a swoosh in the past.
PLAYBOY: The league has threatened serious action if you misbehave again. There has been talk of a lifetime ban. Pippen says you learn nothing from all your crime and punishment. Will you be

"In my whole life I have had between 25 and 30 women. Maybe five good ones."

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ROAST

more careful?
RODMAN: No. If I fuck up, I fuck up. I live in the here and now, and I am not dead yet. But if I die tomorrow, I'll die with a smile on my face.
PLAYBOY: Suppose you punch a coach tomorrow. Could you smile at a lifetime ban?
RODMAN: That won't happen. They will never do that. I am too much of a hot commodity. The NBA won't say goodbye to me. They need me. The NBA is a cripple and I am the crutch. Ha! They tell me to act like a typical athlete, but they are playing both sides of the fence. I get attention. They profit off me. But I am jiving those fogies and they can't do a damn thing about it.
PLAYBOY: The Bulls reportedly ordered you to tone it down. How did that work? Did coach Phil Jackson or owner Jerry Reinsdorf call you in?
RODMAN: They don't talk to me. In a sense they want to control me, but they really want me to go out in the games and do my thing.
PLAYBOY: You loved Chuck Daly, your first pro coach. Then his championship team was dismantled. Daly was bounced and you were traded.
RODMAN: Chuck Daly was a loving, caring man who let you be a man. We won championships. It was a phase I went through.
PLAYBOY: Are you a role model?
RODMAN: No. I don't ask people to look up to me. Nobody in the world is a role model except to his own kids. People think athletes and entertainers are role models for kids, but they're wrong. Kids today have more options than we ever had. They don't need me to show them. These kids are 15 years old, partying their asses off. Every day is Woodstock. But I do ask people to respect the individuality I bring to the table.
PLAYBOY: You are a role model for individualists
RODMAN: People say they don't want our young black kids looking like Dennis Rodman. I'm not asking for that. If it's what they choose, that's their business.
PLAYBOY: Do you want to be back with the Bulls next year?
RODMAN: Very much.
PLAYBOY: Do you care whether Jackson coaches next year?
RODMAN: It's important. You need to have confidence in a coach. I need a good vibe. I call Phil Jackson Lord of Lords—he is psychic. I have had two great coaches in my life, Chuck Daly and Phil Jackson. I don't want any more coaches.
PLAYBOY: If you were uncool enough to coach, what team rules would you have?
RODMAN: Show up for the game. Don't jive my ass. That's all you need.
PLAYBOY: Are you friends with Michael Jordan?
RODMAN: I told you I don't give a fuck about anybody in the NBA. I don't hang with athletes. Hanging with Michael Jordan is supposed to be big news? Please.
PLAYBOY: You trashed some stars in your book: David Robinson is gutless, Pippen can be intimidated. How did they react?
RODMAN: They didn't. I think they respected me for being myself.
PLAYBOY: Talk about a few of your colleagues. How would you describe Michael Jordan?
RODMAN: He's an intriguing, special performer.
PLAYBOY: Scottie Pippen?
RODMAN: A major star in his own world.
PLAYBOY: Charles Barkley?
RODMAN: The Reggie White of the NBA.
PLAYBOY: Shaquille O'Neal?
RODMAN: The future
PLAYBOY: Do you think NBA commissioner David Stern would like to kick you out of the league?
RODMAN: I don't give a damn what David Stern thinks. He's not my fucking father. I don't care what Stern thinks, but I'll tell you what he thinks. He thinks I'm good for the league. David Stern is a closet Dennis Rodman fan.
PLAYBOY: Daly is often called your father figure. The same goes for James Rich, the Oklahoma mailman who took you into his home. Have you been looking for a father since Philander Rodman left when you were three years old?
RODMAN: I don't think that's true.
PLAYBOY: How did you manage without one?
RODMAN: I got used to it. Anyway, a man can't make you be a man. You have to do that yourself. You figure out that life is unpredictable and complicated and that you may not be happy. That's when you become a man.
PLAYBOY: Your father finally wrote to you last year. He sent you a letter from the Philippines.
RODMAN: I didn't get it.
PLAYBOY: After 32 years, he said he wanted to meet you.
RODMAN: He tried to. To me he's just another person trying to get a piece of the action. I don't hate the guy, but hey, I made it without him for all these years. If I met him I'd treat him like anybody else like the people in the casino who want an autograph. After I got through with everybody else I would shake his hand, too, and say, g"How you doing? Nice to meet you."
PLAYBOY: And move on.
RODMAN: That's it.
PLAYBOY: Like your vindication with the photographer. What goes around
RODMAN: Comes around.
PLAYBOY: Is it true that you were so shy as a kid that you had to be pushed off the school bus?
RODMAN: I wasn't really who I am until later. I was shy. I had the same feelings as the other kids, but on the outside I was just going through the motions. Other kids don't give you the option of being happy, being yourself.
PLAYBOY: Did you ever try religion?
RODMAN: Went to church every Sunday until I was 21. I grew up Christian, Baptist, but I could be it all. I do believe in a holy spirit. I don't think you need to go to church to pray. That almighty spirit is everywhere. God is out there working.
PLAYBOY: Does he or she have a special plan for you?
RODMAN: No. I have no purpose at all. I mean, we can always pray to the holy spirit to whisk us away and make everything better, but who knows if that prayer gets there? It's only a mirage.
PLAYBOY: It's probably safe to say that your God isn't some bearded giant wearing a white robe.
RODMAN: Totally safe.
PLAYBOY: Maybe white robes and a boa?
RODMAN: Who knows? He might have on a thong.
PLAYBOY: There is a bit of your legend that doesn't make sense—your theft of 50 watches when you were a janitor at DFW airport. Everyone in the airport can see the security cameras all around. Didn't you know you would be caught?
RODMAN: Maybe I did it to get caught. Sometimes in life you have to light some dynamite, see if it blows up.
PLAYBOY: In a bid for popularity, you gave free watches to almost everyone you knew.

RODMAN: I didn't need popularity. But I didn't need that many watches, and I didn't take them to sell them. It was more to try something different, see what happens.
PLAYBOY: You must have felt alone the night you spent in jail. What was it like in an airport jail?
RODMAN: It's a holding pen. They handcuff you. You sit and wait until the police come pick you up and take you to real jail.
PLAYBOY: Before you finally found basketball stardom at Southeastern Oklahoma State, the James Rich family took you in. You befriended teenager Bryne Rich after he killed a friend in a hunting accident, and you lived with the Riches almost as a son.
RODMAN: Bryne is still my best friend. We were a couple of lost souls. For us, life was fucking confusion plus a bunch of goddamn agony. You just hoped for some part-time happiness once in a while.
PLAYBOY: What do the Riches think of your celebrity?
RODMAN: They're not starstruck. Or they don't show it. One thing about people in Oklahoma, they don't show what they're thinking.
PLAYBOY: Did you dream of playing in the NBA?
RODMAN: Basketball wasn't my dream. I never considered it
PLAYBOY: No posters of Chamberlain or Bill Russell?
RODMAN: If I had been like that, I wouldn't be here now. No, I didn't want to be in the NBA. But I always had an idea something was going to happen to me. It didn't start until I was over 30 years old and learned to express myself.
PLAYBOY: You were 31 when Detroit police found you sleeping in your truck outside the Palace in Auburn Hills. You had a loaded rifle with you. You have said you were thinking of killing yourself. Instead, you decided to change your life.
RODMAN: That was the beginning of salvation. I was 32 years old before I found out who I really am. From then on I just did it, whatever it was.
PLAYBOY: Soon came the tattoos, nose rings and wild hair.
RODMAN: If not for that I would have been more subdued, just an athlete. But I'm having my childhood again from zero to 20. Right now I might be five years old.
[*Soon the Rodman party was in the limo to Paradise, a nightclub where Dennis bought more rounds of drinks. He handed his Peruvian surfer friend, Pepe, a fistful of $1000 chips for safekeeping—the bulge in Pepe's pocket easily held $20,000 in chips. Paradise is a gentlemen's club, a lap-dance joint. No touching; topless women writhe to disco music a half inch from men who pay to be teased. Dennis, who had already bought numerous drinks and flagons of coffee, offered to buy another round—not drinks this time, but lap dances*]
PLAYBOY: Thanks, but no thanks
RODMAN: Come on. Just because you're married?
PLAYBOY: Exactly.
RODMAN: Your wife ain't God, man! She can't see through walls.
[*He playfully shoved us toward a dancer. Without thinking we shoved back. As bodyguard Williams shot us a glance it occurred to us: Had we just missed a chance to earn a quick $200,000? Once again, much of our subsequent talk was shouted over pounding disco music. Sometimes D, as his friends call him, was being m"lapped" as we spoke.*]

PLAYBOY: How many of the breasts here are all-natural?
RODMAN: I'd say 40 percent. What are you drinking? Let's get three more Jägers over here.
PLAYBOY: Jägermeister—the shot-glass drink of champions. You have had more than a few tonight. How can you drink so much and still perform so well on the court?
RODMAN: What the fuck did you say?
PLAYBOY: Do you have a hangover cure?
RODMAN: There is no such thing as a hangover cure.
PLAYBOY: How can you drink so much and be so fit?
RODMAN: I'm talking to you, right? I am on fire! This will be a great interview for you. Because I prepared my mind, bro. I can prepare my mind to party or do business. I can do both. Now, I don't party like this during the season, at least not every day. You have to pick your times. There are times when you need to do business, be physically inclined, do your job. That's when I do business first and party later.
PLAYBOY: Are you ever alone?
RODMAN: Game days I keep to myself.
PLAYBOY: Your workouts are grueling. You'll lift weights for two hours before a game, then run the court and tussle with some of the world's finest athletes, then pump iron for two more hours before you shower. Is that how you get the alcohol out? How much weight do you lift in a day?
RODMAN: I can lift what the mind can endure
PLAYBOY: What thoughts do you have when the ball is in play? Are you thinking in words?
RODMAN: It's a melody, brother. No matter what the tempo of the game, it's always a melody.
PLAYBOY: Off the court, can you control yourself?

RODMAN: [*Shrugs*] Sometimes I don't know what the fuck is going on. I don't. I really don't want to do some of the things I do.
PLAYBOY: What's taboo to you? Anything?
RODMAN: I don't believe in limits. Killing yourself is the only limit.
PLAYBOY: Bob Knight thinks you're a fake. He calls you g"the greatest hustler in the history of mankind."
RODMAN: He said hustler?
PLAYBOY: Hustler.
RODMAN: Then call me Mr. Flynt! I'll be the number one hustler.
PLAYBOY: You wrote that there was a surge in AIDS awareness among NBA players after Magic Johnson announced he was HIV-positive.
RODMAN: Then it went back to the way it was. Athletes are like anybody else. They might plan to use a rubber, but then it doesn't feel right, so they take it off.
PLAYBOY: Doesn't every team have an AIDS meeting some doctor or therapist coming in to tell all the players to use condoms?
RODMAN: That lasts about 15 minutes.
PLAYBOY: How much NBA sex do you think is safe sex?
RODMAN: It's probably about 50-50.
PLAYBOY: Are we headed for a scourge of AIDS among pro athletes?
RODMAN: Why blame the athletes? Athletes didn't start the idea of fucking without condoms. They aren't role models and they don't set a goddamn precedent for society. Don't point to the athletes—they're just like anybody else.
PLAYBOY: Except for being young and rich and having lots of women begging them for sex.
RODMAN: Wear you out.
PLAYBOY: What if you learned you were HIV-positive? How would you react?
RODMAN: What can anyone do? Anybody who has it, what can you do but blame yourself?

"I have had two great coaches in my life, Chuck Daly and Phil Jackson. I don't want any more coaches."

PLAYBOY: Such a sad topic. We should try to lighten up. Tell us what you think is your best color.
RODMAN: White.
PLAYBOY: For purity.
RODMAN: Girls that are white. I like pink, too. The pink and white clouds of love.
PLAYBOY: What's your best feature?
RODMAN: Best feature? Muscle control. Talk about muscle control g"Oh, oh daddy!" It makes for the best fucking around.
PLAYBOY: You have women chasing you from coast to coast. GQ says you might be our greatest m"vulva magnet." Is that a heavy reputation to carry around? Can you live up to your image as a sexual performer?
RODMAN: I don't see it like that. I don't have to prove myself.
PLAYBOY: You imply in your book that you sometimes fake in bed.
RODMAN: I did?
PLAYBOY: You say that sometimes you yell and shout to make the woman you're with feel good about her performance.
RODMAN: Look, I have sex a lot. Sometimes it's just going through the motions. I've faked. Women are always faking that shit—I'm just flipping the coin.
PLAYBOY: Another example of your versatility. You have also made headlines by wearing makeup and dressing in drag. Many people believe you're gay or bisexual, though you have never admitted having a gay experience. What's the current state of your sexuality?
RODMAN: I wouldn't be ashamed to say I was gay. I'm the first to say I would fuck a man's brains out. Giving it or getting it, taking or giving, don't matter—it's all about getting that sensation you want. And on that day I want to fuck a man, I'll announce it. I'll make sure everyone in the world knows I'm gay.
PLAYBOY: But you haven't actually done it yet.
RODMAN: I mentally masturbate. I have sex in my mind. It happens all the time.
PLAYBOY: Are you attracted to men?
RODMAN: We all have a little homosexual in us. We pat each other on the ass. We kiss. I kiss transsexuals. If I think a guy is attractive I can tell him, g"You are a beautiful motherfucker." I'll hug him and kiss him.
PLAYBOY: If you kiss a man in friendship, does it matter if he's good-looking?
RODMAN: [*Pauses*] Yes.
PLAYBOY: What does your mother think when she sees you in makeup and a gown?
RODMAN: She doesn't care. She's got a new house.
PLAYBOY: Do you ever wear women's clothing in private?
RODMAN: I wear it once in a while. It shows that I am not just an athlete. It shows that I'm not afraid of society. I'm unconventional.
PLAYBOY: You don't really have a gay streak, do you?
RODMAN: I have done a lot for the gay community. I make it more acceptable. I am an entertainer, a phenomenon and a historical landmark
PLAYBOY: You say you don't mind fantasizing about gay sex, but you always stop short of actually doing it.
RODMAN: Sex should be a mystery. You need some mystery to it. You don't have that if everybody's the same. And if that's not true then everybody would be gay and lesbian, wouldn't they?
[*We finished on Sunday in his penthouse suite at the Mirage, high above the special-effects volcano. Rodman was shirtless, stretching, just waking up for breakfast. It was four p.m. Rodman's female companion, Chicago businessman Bill Marovitz and bodyguard Williams were watching the NBA All-Star Game on TV. Rodman watched, but looked bored. He said the All-Star Game is over-hyped. Forty-eight hours before his return to the court, Rodman spoke softly.*]
PLAYBOY: When was the last time you were alone?
RODMAN: When I sleep, I'm alone.

PLAYBOY: Your agent, Dwight Manley, tells us that you sleepwalk. He'll be sleeping on the couch in your house or a hotel suite when you lumber out, push him aside and lie down.
RODMAN: No, no. That was kidding around.
PLAYBOY: But you do sleepwalk?
RODMAN: Sometimes. Everybody does.
PLAYBOY: That's not true.
RODMAN: Yes, you do it. Everybody sleepwalks once in a while.
PLAYBOY: Other than partying, have you prepared for the season's second half?
RODMAN: My mind is ready.
PLAYBOY: Do you have anything planned for your return?
RODMAN: Be in fucking character, that's it. When the camera is on, the shows begin.
PLAYBOY: You say you'll give your salary back next year if your performance doesn't measure up. Who decides whether you were good enough?
RODMAN: [*Smiling*] Me
PLAYBOY: You say you don't plan ahead, but it sounds like you have all the bases covered. Is Bob Knight right about you?
RODMAN: They say I'm either a genius or the most stupid, illiterate motherfucker in the world. Some people call it clever. Do you know what I call it? Brilliant. I call it brilliant. Wile E. Coyote, that's me. Wile E. Coyote.
PLAYBOY: And celebrity?
RODMAN: It pays for me and my child
PLAYBOY: You don't see your daughter much.
RODMAN: Alexis, she's going on nine. She's my role model. She's so beautiful. You know what breaks my heart? Seeing her so shy. All the kids talk behind her back. Even at the private school she goes to, she can't escape being my daughter. We talk on the phone and she says, g"Daddy, I don't want to go to school." It's making me more sheltered. This fucking image of mine—sometimes I can't deal with it. I have two veins keeping me going—my emotion and my little girl.
PLAYBOY: You were a shy kid.
RODMAN: I'm still shy, brother. Watch me with Jay Leno. He'll ask something personal and I'll look down at the ground. I can't look up. I saw Jimi Hendrix on an old Dick Cavett show; he did the same thing. He was shy. Now I see Alexis doing that same look.
PLAYBOY: How often do you see your daughter?
RODMAN: I don't see her. My ex-wife has her. I have a stupid-ass ex-wife writing a book full of bullshit. We were married only 82 days, but now that I have a little pocket money, she thinks, I'll get rich off his fame. I'm like O.J. Everything I do, people want to make money off it.
PLAYBOY: Do you attempt to see your daughter?
RODMAN: I may have to get lawyers to get me the right to see her. I'd spend all the money it takes. And before I ever have another kid, I want to give my all to Alexis.

PLAYBOY: Do your family problems make you cynical?
RODMAN: No. They make me real. I accept them and go on.
PLAYBOY: What contact do you have with Annie, your ex-wife?
RODMAN: I call her and ask for Alexis
PLAYBOY: Do you think men and women can learn to get along?
RODMAN: Of course not.
PLAYBOY: Do you want to get married again?
RODMAN: It's hard to go on a scavenger hunt. It's hard to tell who is real and who's only after your money. I had a girl sue me for giving her herpes, which I didn't do.
PLAYBOY: Do you believe in marriage?
RODMAN: I think something happens when you get married. Maybe you made love to your wife before, but it's not the same because now you have to. And you can really make love to the same person only so many times; after that you just go through the motions. You're just fucking. You can make love to a girlfriend. You make love to your girlfriend and your standbys because you don't want to lose them, but you have got to fuck your wife.
PLAYBOY: Last basketball question. Do you have any responsibility to the NBA?
RODMAN: The NBA can kiss my ass. That's their responsibility.
PLAYBOY: Are you misunderstood?
RODMAN: I'm not crazy. I am not Hannibal Lecter. That's the shock of Dennis Rodman if you get to know me—I'm very calm. I am a tidal wave of calm and I'm right here [*pointing to his eyes*], looking at you.

ANITA PATHAMMAVONG TAPS INTO HER INTUITION —AND YOURS

WRITTEN BY
ANITA PATHAMMAVONG

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
EVAN WOODS

Our March 2020 Playmate, with the help of her mystical cards, is here to offer some much-needed spiritual counsel.

I started reading tarot cards about three years ago. I was going through a breakup and a lot of change was happening in my life, so my friends helped me learn how to do readings for myself. Tarot helped reassure me that things would turn out okay.

Eventually I became interested in oracle cards. Tarot and oracle readings both require you to get in touch with spirituality, but they're actually pretty different. To read tarot you really have to study and master the cards; it's very structured. With oracle cards, there's more room for creative and personalized interpretations. I like both, but I prefer oracle because it's so freewheeling and open-ended.

Whenever I do oracle readings I shuffle the deck and think to myself, What does the person receiving this reading need to get out of it? In a way, it's like being a psychic medium. You're not really reading the person; the cards are. It's your job to relay the messages from the cards to the person receiving them.

Humans are creatures of habit by nature, and it's natural to feel shaken right now. Change is always uncomfortable, but it always has something positive to offer. This quarantine is the perfect opportunity to be still and look inward; oracle cards can help with that. For me, oracle cards help me get in tune with myself and stay grounded. (We also just had a full moon, so it's an ideal time to reset intentions and start fresh.)

Oracle is also easy to learn. Anyone can pick up a deck and explore the cards without any formal training. I've been sheltering in place in New York for a few weeks now, and I've used the opportunity to do readings for myself and friends. I've also gone on Instagram Live a few times to do group readings—including for Playboy!

Right now people are feeling scared and panicked, but we have to remember that we're all in this together. Whether you're quarantined by yourself or with others, try to find new ways to connect with people. Stop and notice your surroundings. Find gratitude.

Anita's Revelation of Wisdom Guide

1. Shuffle the cards and set your intentions. What wisdom are you looking for? What are you struggling with right now?

2. Pick three cards out of the deck. The cards may (literally) jump out at you; other times you might have to use your intuition.

3. The first card you pick is the lesson to be learned. This will help guide you toward the source of your troubles.

4. The second card you pick is how it might be learned. This card can help you understand the situation better.

5. The final card you pick is wisdom revealed. This card helps you connect the dots between all three cards. It tells you how you can overcome a problem in your life and what you can learn from that "problem."

A Sex Doll Stole My Identity

BY JAMES TREW

Yael Cohen is five-seven with chestnut hair and a Mediterranean complexion. She's also five-four, blonde and with soft white skin. Sometimes she's five-11, dark-haired and black. Your very own Yael is available to order, in any configuration you like, as long as you have the money.

Forget Deepfakes: A sex-toy company in Asia is "borrowing" the likenesses of Instagram influencers—without their consent—to create best-selling dolls

Only one of those combinations describes the living, breathing Yael Cohen—a popular Instagrammer from Israel. Now 23 years old, she just completed four years of mandatory military service, during which she worked as a software engineer. Like many people her age, Cohen enjoys posting attractive pictures of herself on Instagram. She's worked hard to build a following and enjoys interacting with her fans. As Cohen tells it, she decided to take ownership of her image and her right to feel sexy. This is the internet, of course, so some sexual objectification is unavoidable, but few could have predicted how literal that would be for Cohen.

About a year ago, Cohen received a message from one of her followers. It linked to a forum about sex dolls. When she clicked it, she was met with an eerily familiar face: hers. The thread was started by the doll's maker, and it described a new "model" of head coming soon; this one was a rough prototype. Cohen brushed it off as a coincidence.

Months later, she received another DM. This time there was no mistaking it—the link showed the final doll. Although its likeness to Cohen is subjective, its inspiration is not. It shares her first name and in some pictures sports an ombré wig similar to one Cohen sometimes uses in her posts. In case there was any doubt, the doll's creator proudly explained, "Yael is inspired by this beautiful lady," with links to several of Cohen's Instagram pictures. "How will she satisfy your great fantasy?" he asked. The forum users subsequently explained just how.

The discovery sent Cohen into a spin. Being a woman online already comes with harsh realities, something Cohen and anyone else who identifies as female knows all too well. Being popular on Instagram only raises the stakes—but someone using your face to make a sex doll, with a choice of bodies and a functioning vagina, isn't usually one of them.

"I'm confident with my own body, and I also like to share my thoughts, my points of view, my beliefs," Cohen tells Playboy. "But it's something that nobody teaches you how to react to. After the first shock, I started feeling some complex feelings."

"Complex" is likely an understatement. It's a big leap from typical entitled Instagram comments about how fuckable you are to discovering a physical clone that is, well, actually fuckable.

In the past few years, what it means to be objectified online has shifted dramatically, with the standards for exploitation being dismantled and rebuilt in incomprehensible ways.

Around the end of 2017, Deepfakes emerged. These AI-generated videos could superimpose anyone's face over anyone else's. Needless to say, the technology soon found a spiritual home in porn. Before long, subreddits spilled over with fake Emma Watson and Gal Gadot videos. Look-alike porn actors or run-of-the-mill Photoshops suddenly seemed quaint; you could simply feed an app some images and humiliate women that way instead. In fact, DeepNude, an app that spat out naked images with any face you fed it, served up only female bodies.

Deepfakes may be realistic, but they're virtual. They may live online forever, but they'll soon be replaced with the next "it's just a bit of fun" attack on female privacy. While the personal impact of Deepfakes is not to be dismissed, they're still a visual extension of the male fantasy a turn-on that you must eventually turn off.

Not only was her likeness taken, but the doll has her name and is directly linked to her. It has built-in marketing, all for the sweet price of zero dollars.

Cohen knows that anyone who buys "Yael" can do whatever they want to her, whenever they want, and there's no DMCA takedown service to stop it. "If I wanted to have nudes, I would have nudes," she says. "If I wanted to have a sex doll, I would have a sex doll. They took my choice away. It's sort of forcing me to show my body naked."

Owners of these dolls frequently share their exploits on the forums. Sexual activity is usually only implied, bar the odd discussion about the merits of a built-in versus a removable vagina or about accurate anus placement. The bulk of what owners share is painfully pedestrian. Photosets depict Yael shopping or maybe enjoying a day in the garden. Sometimes these innocent scenarios seem more invasive—as though someone took a piece of Cohen's soul and forced her to live with them.

Sex dolls made in the likeness of real people aren't new. The difference here is that Cohen isn't a porn star, she was never approached by the company, she never gave her consent, and she receives precisely nothing from any sales.

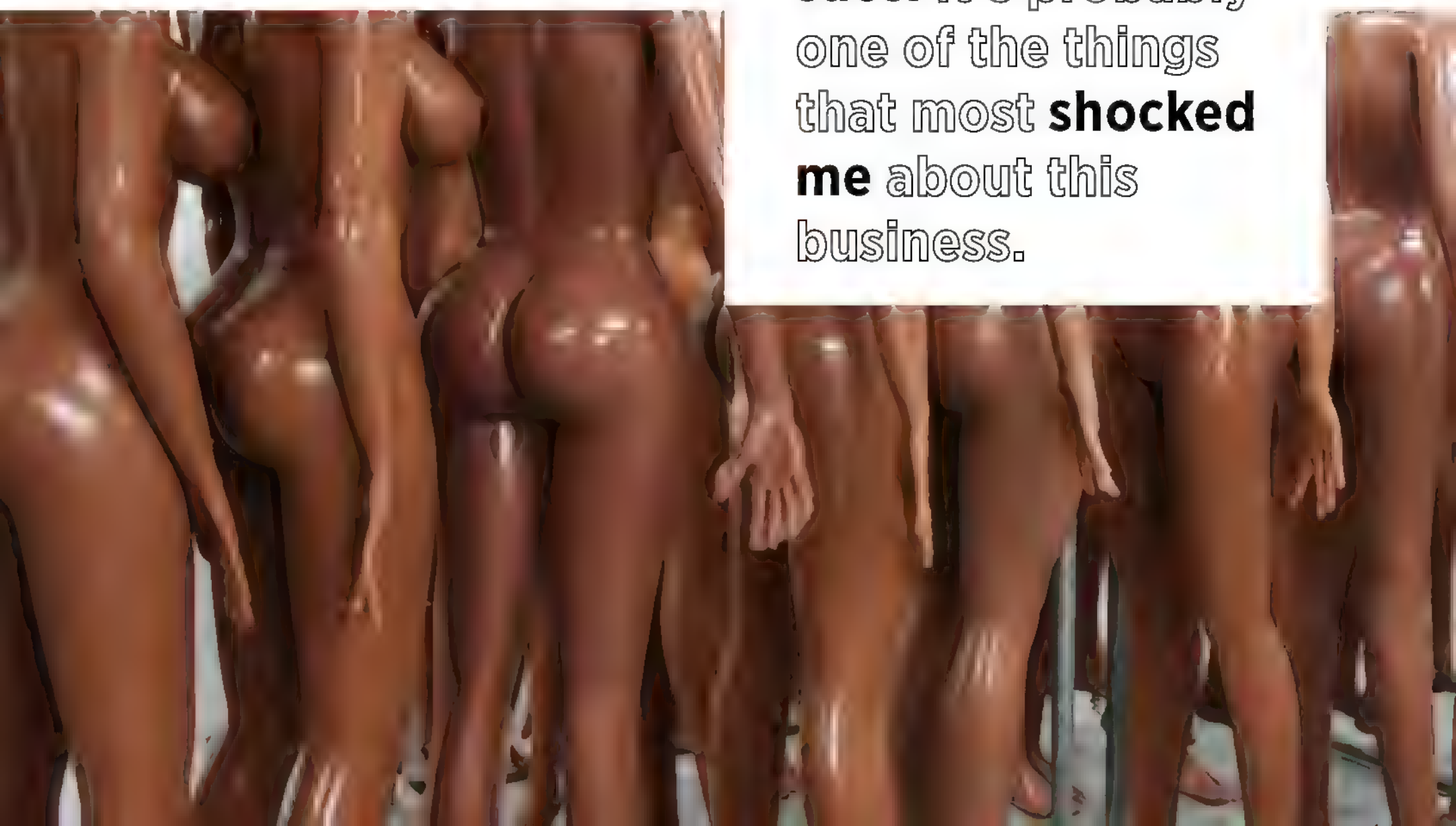
Jade Stanley, founder of the U.K.-based sexdollofficial.com, specializes in bespoke creations but also offers licensed porn-star dolls. "I'm actually the only company in the world that offers the service that I do," she says. "I know you've got RealDoll in the States and everything, but they still do not do what I do. I can replicate anything."

Each time someone buys one of Stanley's licensed dolls, the performer can expect around $500 (though her dolls are more expensive than those of the company that makes "Yael"). Cohen's reaction to this is as you'd expect: "Wow, that means if I actually had that, I would be very rich right now." She'd noted that "Yael" had been in the company's best-seller spot for weeks. But it isn't the money that bothers her; it's the loss of control. And when you're trying to carve out a career based on your personal brand, control is everything.

Stanley also highlights a side of the business that rarely makes the headlines: "The majority of my [*bespoke*] customers are people who suffer with anxiety or loneliness issues. It's probably one of the things that most shocked me about this business when I first got into it."

Too often we think of the carnal side and forget that, ultimately, we're all human (except the dolls). When Stanley tells me this, I reconsider the more innocent interactions I've seen on the forum. None of it seems malicious or evil—it's almost sweet. The owners probably haven't considered that somewhere the real Yael is feeling violated. But that doesn't make it okay.

The majority of my [bespoke] customers are people who suffer with anxiety or loneliness issues. It's probably one of the things that most shocked me about this business.



Courtesy **Alex Raysikh**

She'd have a very good claim under most states' laws for violation of her rights to publicity. So this could be a multimil-lion-dollar case."

When I tell Stanley about Cohen, she's appalled, saying it's not uncommon for individuals to ask for dolls based on real people, but usually it's an amalgamation—Ariana Grande's eyes, Kiera Knightley's nose, that kind of thing. It's like a modern-day version of Weird Science, where clients program their perfect woman into a computer and out pops Kelly LeBrock. But these are one-offs, not for mass production.

Adult performers have long endorsed specific body-part replicas too. You can buy Fleshlights cast from the private parts of dozens of adult performers. Misty Stone tells me she has all three of her orifices available for purchase—and a full doll made in her likeness. For her, it's a lucrative second income.

"When I first started with Fleshlight, those checks were fucking amazing," Stone says. "I get $12,000, $10,000, $6,000 here, $8,000 there. There are so many girls who have them, you know; you want to get your fans to buy yours. So you just promote, promote, promote on your social media, and you make good money back."

Ironically, that point is not lost on Cohen. "I feel in some way I'm helping them sell it because it's my name. People buy it because it's me, because it's attached to my photos." Salt, meet wound. Not only was her likeness taken, but the doll has her name and is directly linked to her. It has built-in marketing, all for the sweet price of zero dollars.

Of course there's a robust legal system in place to stop this, right? Well, no, not really. When Cohen first sought legal advice, a lawyer told her she simply wasn't famous enough. Fortunately, it turns out even us regular folks do have rights.

"What most lawyers would instantly jump on here is what's called 'the right of publicity,'" says Jonathan Steinsapir, a partner at KWIKA law firm. He should know: He represented Kendall Jenner when Cutera cosmetics allegedly used images of her to promote its products without her permission.

According to Steinsapir, most U.S. states recognize a right of publicity. If any Yael dolls are sold in those states, Cohen would have a claim. One high-profile example of the right of publicity is when Taster's Choice used a handsome male countenance on some of its labels. The plaintiff, Russell Christoff, was originally paid a trivial sum for a photo shoot with a clause stating that if his image was used in marketing, he'd be further compensated. Nestlé, owner of the Taster's Choice brand at the time, used the image again, without telling him, and paid the price. The jury initially awarded Cristoff $15 million. The final sum he received is not known.

I don't know about you, but a coffee container seems less of a personal invasion than an anatomically accurate sex doll in your likeness. Steinsapir agrees.

"If she has not consented to allow her image to be used for a sex doll, it's just offensive," he says. "She'd have a very good claim under most states' laws for violation of her rights to publicity. It would also entitle her to punitive damages, which can multiply your actual damages by anywhere up to 10 times. So this could be a multimillion-dollar case."

Unfortunately, the company that makes the Yael doll is based in China, where concepts of intellectual property are very different. Enforcing a U.S. judgment internationally is not impossible, but sometimes it might as well be. Still, the doll is sold in the U.S., so the potential is there.

Sometimes the most important judgment is one that hits a little closer to home. I ask Cohen what her mother thinks about all this. "It took me a couple of weeks to tell her," she says. "I needed to find the perfect timing and the courage to do it." When Cohen eventually took her aside, her mother was surprised but supportive. "Of course, she'd rather I stayed as a software engineer and not be on Instagram, but they love me for me."

When I reach out to the company that makes the doll, it doesn't immediately respond. I ask Cohen what one thing she would tell the company if she could.

"I honestly just want to know why," she replies. "Why did you do that?"

We may never know the answer. Neither Stanley nor Stone, both women in this industry, had ever heard of something like this beyond trivial cases like a blow-up doll that was sorta-kinda based on Miley Cyrus. Even that was more of a knock-off Halloween costume than an actual likeness

One thing's for sure: This will happen again. The same manufacturer is already working on a doll based on actress and social media star Liza Soberano, which it flaunted on the same forum as it did "Yael."

It's hard to blame the customers. We don't know their motivations, and many won't ever know the doll they bought is based on a real person. And there will always be the victim blamers who say things like "Well, what did you expect? You're a public-facing woman on the internet"—an outdated view that doesn't seem to be going anywhere soon.

As for the company behind the doll? It changed the wording of its initial forum post once it caught wind that Cohen knew about it. She also suspects some of the defensive comments about the doll on her Instagram post were from employees. Who knows how many of the company's dolls are based on unsuspecting women?

In the meantime, Cohen hopes to get back to her normal life, without the specter of her silicone sister looming over her.

"I just want to keep working on the things I love," she says, "reach people and influence them, promoting my beliefs and ideas and hopefully making the world a better place."

GEENA ROCERO'S
SPECIAL RECIPE

WRITTEN BY
GEENA ROCERO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
EVAN WOODS

Our August 2019 Playmate reflects on the cultural and personal redolence of the Philippines' national dish — and its surprising shelter-in-place usefulness

Chicken adobo is pretty much the most famous Filipino dish. We have 7,000 islands in the Philippines, and different islands have different ways of making it.

When I was growing up, my dad did most of the cooking (and the dishes and the laundry; he was the best stay-at-home dad). My mom was the breadwinner a teacher for 22 years who always had a side hustle, like doing sales for various products. For a conservative culture like the one I grew up in, the roles were definitely reversed.

I moved to the United States at 17 and lived with my mom in San Francisco. My dad passed away before we left the Philippines, so my mom learned how to cook basically everything he'd cooked. Four years later, I moved to New York City by myself. The first month, a cold March in 2005, I was so homesick; I just wanted something homey and comfy. I remember phoning my mom to say, "I'm craving your cooking!" So she basically told me how to cook chicken adobo over the phone, and once I'd learned it I was like, That's how simple it is?

I'd never cooked anything in my life except boiling water for noodles or frying an egg. After that lesson from my mom, I started experimenting with omelets because you can mix and match so many different things. From the very beginning the concept was, What can I do that doesn't necessarily have to follow a strict recipe? As I moved forward, I realized it's just about understanding the base. Filipino cooking usually starts with sautéing garlic and onion, garlic and ginger or a combination of the three. Then you build it up with fish sauce, soy sauce, vinegar or even tomato sauce. As soon as I'd learned those basic ideas, I was like, You know what? I can do this!

I started sharing my chicken adobo with neighbors and friends. One or two drumsticks with white rice is so easy to cook, and I loved doing it. Cooking at home feels appropriate for this time, because you can make a lot so you'll have leftovers. And you have options, which is especially important now that most of us are sheltering in place. If you don't have one of the ingredients and can't go to the store, you just swap in something else.

Perhaps most famous Filipino restaurant in New York is a place called Jeepney. Filipinos living in the United States are, by many counts, the second largest population of Asian Americans (after the Chinese), but our food cultures just recently entered the mainstream conversation. In the last couple of years, Jeepney led the way in cooking unapologetic Filipino food and providing a cultural hub for young Filipino Americans.

I had my August 2019 Playmate party there. They created a life-sized print of my Centerfold and hung it at the front of the restaurant. It's home to me, obviously.

When the COVID-19 tragedy started happening last month, I reached out to the owner, who's a dear friend of mine, and asked what I could do to help. We created a fund-raising video to help her take care of her employees and sell merch. And I just saw that they're open for delivery now!

Chicken Adobo by Geena Rocero

INGREDIENTS

2	tablespoons coconut oil
6	cloves smashed garlic
½	medium red or white onion
10	pieces chicken (my favorite is dark meat either drumsticks or thighs)
¾ cup	soy sauce
½ cup	vinegar (white, apple cider or coconut vinegar works)
½ cup	chicken broth or water
6 bay	leaves

Ground black pepper to taste (the more peppery the better)

2 tablespoons lemon juice (I prefer fresh lemon)

STEPS

1. Heat coconut oil in a wok or large pan.
2. Sauté garlic and onion till brown.
3. Add chicken and brown on both sides
4. Add soy sauce, vinegar, broth/water, bay leaves and pepper.
5. Simmer over medium heat for about 10 minutes
6. Stir, then reduce heat to low and simmer another 15 minutes or until chicken is cooked
7. Drizzle the lemon juice.
8. Serve with steamed white rice (sometimes I use coconut garlic rice).

This dish lasts in the fridge; I'd say it actually gets better over time as the marinade seeps in. (I sometimes eat it for days!) I also shred the chicken and add it to soup, salad or a wrap.

CHASITY SAMONE RETHINKS THE MAKEOVER

WRITTEN BY
CHASITY SAMONE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ADRIENNE RAQUEL

Our February 2020 Playmate shows that DIY beauty and wellness (and a glass or two of wine) can help us all stay grounded

When I decided to start modeling, I moved to New York in search of a place where I belonged. I didn't know what type of model I should be, since modeling has specific lanes you can land in—fashion, commercial, swimsuit, beauty. I kept working shoots, and the beauty community eventually found me. I didn't know I could be a beauty model until they told me.

The beauty industry accepted me from the beginning, and I've met so many amazing people through it. Coloured Raine—founded by Loraine Dowdy, a black woman—was one of the first beauty companies to gave me opportunities. There was also AJ Crimson, and I worked with Jeffree Star for many years. They helped make me who I am today.

I deeply admire the beauty industry for the strides it has made in promoting all types of beauty. We have to work hard to make a name for ourselves—if you don't run with what's new and do what needs to be done, you'll just get left behind—but the groundbreaking people I work with have global followings. I feel we've made good progress even though we still have a long way to go. There are also different levels to representation: Diverse models are an important step, but we should also be represented behind the scenes—as founders and makeup artists and more.

Being quarantined, you'd think beauty would be less important since people aren't out and about but that assumes you get dolled up only for others. I was just telling my sister, who had broken a nail and was upset about it, that beauty and all the self-care it can bring should be seen as a mental health issue. When I look good, I feel good. If I'm not looking on-point, then I'll probably be feeling a little off that day. How you perceive your beauty affects your energy.

Now that we're without our usual beauty services—we can't go to the nail salon, we can't go to the beauty shop—it's extra important to be resourceful. Allow yourself to experiment; look on YouTube and see what you can do for yourself. And there's always something on Amazon you can buy to perk yourself up. I want to bring some cheer to my day-to-day, so I've been messing with colors and glitter. For my Instagram Live tutorial with Playboy I'll likely be using my favorite palettes to try out a spring look.

You don't always have control over what's happening around you, but you can control yourself and focus on your own sanity. That's what my passion for beauty does for me.

Chasity's Self-care Tips

See how to be your best self in quarantine

1. SKIN CARE
Do some research and find a combo that helps you end the day feeling fresh. Every evening I apply cleanser, rosewater toner, moisturizer and avocado eye cream.

2. YOGA, PRAYER OR MEDITATION
I love this because it requires close to no equipment and can be done anywhere.

3. CONNECTING WITH LOVED ONES
Staying in touch can keep you grounded. I have 10 brothers and sisters, so our FaceTime is pretty lit.

4. PLANNING
Give yourself something to look forward to when social distancing comes to an end. The first thing I'm going to do is plan a trip to Tulum.

5. INDULGING
A glass of wine cannot be underestimated.

EKATERINA ASTASHENKOVA

Ekaterina! What an absolute honor to have you grace our September cover! How excited were you to be the cover of Playboy?
Hello, and it is a great honor for me to be the face of September cover! I admit this has been my dream for the last couple of years. I thought about it, was shy, but at the same time I was looking for an opportunity and the opportunity itself found me! I am very happy!

Modeling is a big part of your life, could you tell us what inspired you to start and what your journey has been like to get to this point?
Well, okay! This is a very interesting and long story, but I will try to tell it briefly. In my family, my dad is very religious, and such interests have been forbidden to me since childhood. You know, the most forbidden fruit is ultimately the sweetest. I secretly dreamed of becoming a model and getting on the cover of Playboy. And at the age of 17, I won the competition of a model school in the city of Vladivostok for free education. I often heard criticism, but it was justified, I tried not to offend anyone, but to work harder on myself! It made me stronger on the way to the goal! I remember... the first photo sessions, the first portfolios... the makeup artists, stylists, photographers! I realized that it was definitely for me. I moved to Moscow, won the Top Model of the World 2018 Russia competition and reached the world final, where I became the winner in the Miss Globe 2018 nomination. Castings, photoshoots, frequent international photo projects and flights. I feel like a fish in water. I found myself. And now Playboy Australia. And you know, I'm sure there are still many interesting things ahead!

You look incredible, what are some of your favorite ways to work out?
I am active! I walk about 20 thousand steps a day. I find it most comfortable to keep my figure in the right shape through proper nutrition. But I also love training. My favorites are total stretch, body pump, TRX and swimming.

Tell us something surprising about you?
I love to conquer new heights! Both literally and figuratively. You know, there is a mountain in Russia, it is called Elbrus, its height is 5642 meters. I once climbed there in 6 days with a 30kg backpack, so far this is my biggest mountain tourism record, but I plan to climb Mount Kilimanjaro next year. Simply because it is higher than Elbrus. I like to overcome myself madly and broaden my horizons.

Describe yourself in one sentence?
My boundaries are the whole world.

What makes you tick?
I am driven by a kind heart, love, great ambition. I feel stronger when I can be useful to people who appreciate it and with my ambitions, I cannot sit in one place for a long time. I always need a new achievement.

Thank you so much for sitting with us and letting us get to know a bit about you! Any last words for our readers out there?
It's such a difficult period for the whole world. I wish you to remain strong and healthy. And don't forget beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Make sure you follow Ekaterina Sovernova on Instagram @ekaterinasovernova to be the latest news and stories updated.

PLAYMATE ASHLEY MATTINGLY: A REMEMBRANCE

WRITTEN BY
THE PLAYBOY EDITORS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
THE PLAYBOY ARCHIVES

With sadness and great fondness, Playboy remembers the spry Texas native who lit up our March 2011 issue

Strength and Beauty. That was the title, both apt and prophetic, of Ashley Mattingly's March 2011 Playmate pictorial. The opening spread shows her kickboxing, doing an impressive leg press (with pink barbell weights, no less) and facing the camera, chin up, mouth set, eyes confronting the viewer with quiet confidence—and a hint of fierceness.

Last week, the world lost Ashley. Members of her family told People that "our dear sister with a larger-than-life personality took her own life." Ashley had been open about her struggles with addiction and the trauma of abuse on her Instagram account, which also includes images of the radiant Texan on horseback, on a yacht and feeding a golden retriever puppy she adopted last year. It's clear that the joie de vivre she expressed in her pictorial "I'm really good at having fun!"—glowed from within even as she fought her demons.

"She was adventurous. She was blunt. She was a rebel with a big heart," says Carrie Stevens, our June 1997 Playmate and a close friend of Ashley's.

Born in Dallas on September 10, 1986, Ashley was a shy kid who came out of her shell when she discovered track and cross-country running in high school. She moved to Los Angeles four years before we published her pictorial and immediately took to the city's glamorous side. "I adore slipping on a Versace dress and a pair of Jimmy Choos and going to dinner at Madeo, which is so much fun and such a scene," she told us. "The paparazzi are always out front!"

There was no missing Ashley around southern California's dining establishments especially when she brought a certain friend along. p"Ashley used to have a Persian cat that she took everywhere with her," Carrie tells Playboy. "She even brought the cat to restaurants."

Ashley's mischievous spirit shines through in one of Carrie's favorite memories of their friendship. p"I was spending a weekend with Ashley when she lived in Laguna Beach," she says. "She had these neighbors three guys that lived in the apartment next to hers. She told me they never locked their door so we went in and the place was a pig sty. We pranked them by making all their beds and cleaning while they were out. We were laughing so hard then one of them came home and we hid in the other room giggling until he busted us. We had silly fun together."

On her Data Sheet, Ashley voiced her idea of sexy: "A woman who holds herself well, is impeccably classy and is not judgmental of others." In hindsight, the line could double as a description of Ashley herself.

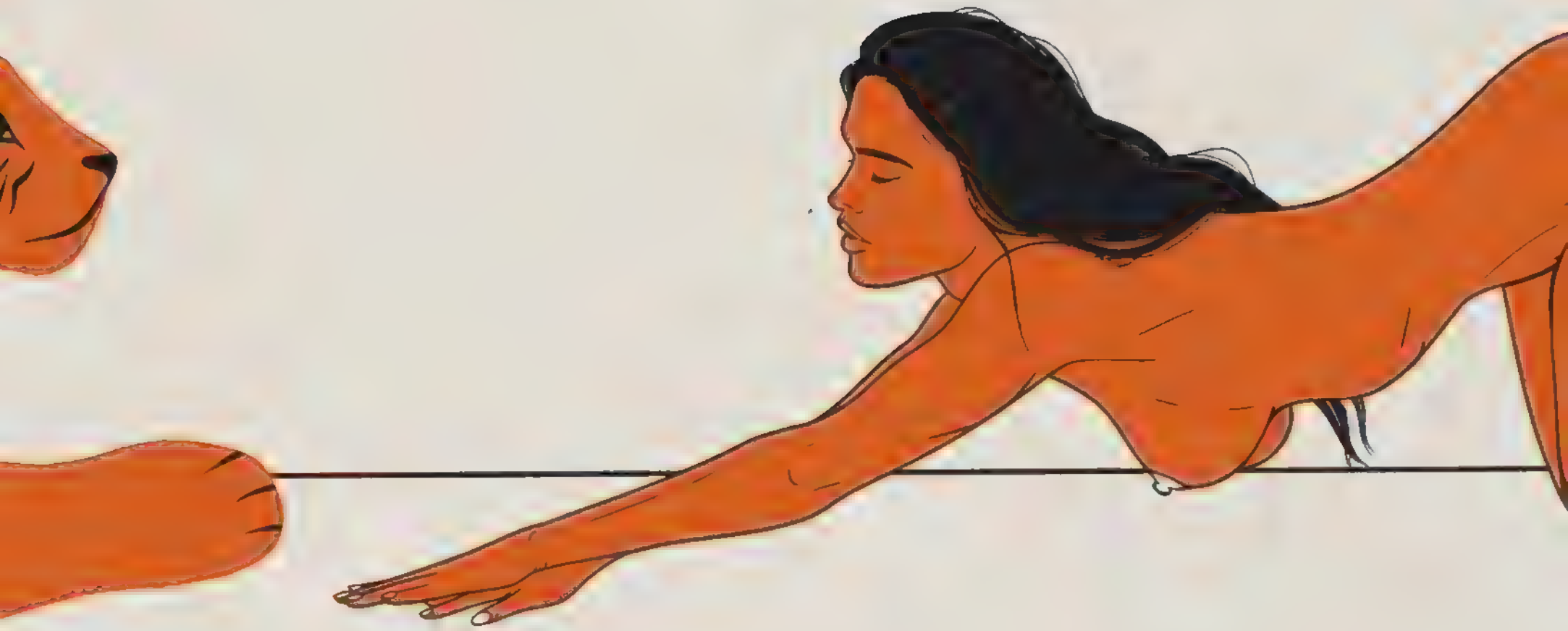
We send our very best to the Mattingly family. Ashley, strong and beautiful, will live on in our pages and in our hearts.

If you have struggled with addiction, survived abuse or thought about taking your life, we urge you to consider using the following resources:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255), suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Crisis Text Line: text STRENGTH to 741-741
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233, thehotline.org
SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Services Administration) National Helpline: 800-662-HELP (4357)

‘Tiger King’ *Star*

Saff Saffery Opens Up About Sex, Drugs and Joe Exotic



Saff Saffery tells Playboy about his attack, his gender identity and his unexpected new life

BY **RYAN GAJEWSKI**
ILLUSTRATION BY **KATIE BAILIE**

A key draw of Tiger King, the Netflix series that has become 2020's omnipresent pop culture phenomenon, is that each cast member seems more eccentric and baffling than the last. This helps to explain why zoo employee Saff Saffery has emerged as a breakout star: He's one of the few voices of reason on the show.

Saffery worked for Joseph Maldonado-Passage, a.k.a. Joe Exotic, at the G.W. Zoo in Oklahoma for nearly a decade before leaving in 2018. Footage of the 2013 tiger attack that led to the amputation of the Hawaii native's left hand is one of the most visceral and jarring moments on a show lousy with jaw-dropping reveals.

Saffery seems conflicted about his decision to move to southern California and take a job that doesn't involve animals, given his enduring passion for wildlife. But he's certainly enjoying his celebrity—relishing photo opportunities with excited fans during essential shopping trips and even joining Cameo to deliver heartfelt messages at $75 a pop.

Taking a call from Playboy last weekend, he was as upbeat and forthright as ever while discussing his life before, during and after the filming of the series. Saffery, who turns 34 this year, spoke at length about the show's depiction of sexuality, including Joe Exotic's marriages, the continued investigation into the disappearance of Carole Baskin's husband, the one thing he wishes the show did differently and the tweets stating Saffery was misgendered on the show. Attention, Hollywood casting directors: He also has thoughts on whether a certain Twilight hunk should portray him in a hypothetical film adaptation.

PLAYBOY: Tiger King includes footage from the tiger attack that cost you your hand. Is that a moment you think about often?

SAFFERY: More so lately. It's definitely been part of my conversation, but I've kind of pushed past it. Other traumatic events have happened in my life that I've done the same to. The documentary showed the clip, which my family and friends hadn't seen. That brought it to a more real state as far as my relationships, because they're like, "Holy smokes, we had no idea it was like that." They only know what I tell them.

Of course, when the news covered it in 2013, they never showed that clip at all. It was interesting to revisit it in such a real form, because before that it was very cosmetic: It was very "Yeah, this happened. He bit me, and I went to the hospital, and that's it." Now they've seen it from front to back. I don't think there's any negative that I pull from it. I got through it, and I moved on, and I keep doing so every day.

PLAYBOY: Your situation is certainly inspiring for anyone going through similar trauma.

SAFFERY: It's all about leaning on each other too. John Reinke, the park manager, had already lost his legs at that point. I met him when he had no legs, and what they don't show is that he walked me through it hand in hand. It was always nice to have him around to help me navigate being an amputee. The best we can do is share our experiences. You never know who you're helping out.

PLAYBOY: Did you feel pressured to come back to the zoo right away?

SAFFERY: No, no, no. I never felt pressured, and I know it was somewhat portrayed that way. I can understand that, but what people need to realize is what I've said a hundred times, and I'll say it again: There was nothing in that hospital for me. I wanted out of there so badly because I knew the longer I stayed, the bigger of a story this was going to become. If the story got too big, then the park could have been shut down, and that's the animals' home. Where would they go from there? If I was pressured by anything, it was my passion for those animals.

PLAYBOY: You started at the G.W. Zoo in 2010, after you got out of the Army. What is a job interview with Joe Exotic like?

SAFFERY: I don't think we even had an interview. I didn't know who he was; after the Army I just googled "getting to interact with tigers." I was in my late 20s, and we started corresponding by e-mail. We went back and forth for about a week because I was still in Fort Sill. When I finally made it out there, I remember waiting in the front gift shop, and they called him over the radio. He walks through the door—and mind you, I'd been on his website, so I'd seen pictures of him. I knew exactly who he was, but I didn't know his personality. He comes in 100 percent Joe Exotic, right off the bat. The second you meet him, he just solidifies everything you think of him.

PLAYBOY: There's so much sexuality to this show, between the polyamory and the tigers being used to attract women in Vegas. What do you make of all that?

SAFFERY: When you look at a tiger, the only thing you can feel is attraction to it. It's a beautiful animal, and not only is it beautiful, it's dangerous and mysterious. In my opinion, women like bad boys. What's more badass than a tiger? I'll wait, but I don't think you'll find something. [laughs] I couldn't tell you how many times I've seen people react with shock-appeal when they see a tiger. From kids all the way up to adults, it's just something everyone's attracted to.

PLAYBOY: What's your take on Joe's sex appeal and how he's so alluring to younger men?

SAFFERY: Boy, that's definitely something I stayed away from when I was on the park. I stayed as far outside that world as possible because it really had nothing to do with the animals. And this is just my opinion, but if you look at everyone in that documentary, they're living their life their way, and they're all unapologetically happy. Who am I to even touch that?

"Carole's a very different kind of person. She's not your average Carole walking around the street."

The only time it ever came into play in conversations between Joe and me was if it affected animal care. Travis was one of the ones who brought that up the most. Travis, he was a joy of life, but he got into everything and made it so hard for the employees to do anything. He was just a mess. He would hide in the bushes and scare them as they were trying to do chores. It was funny, but it slowed down the chore day for sure.

PLAYBOY: How loving were Joe's marriages?

SAFFERY: As loving as one could say. I know that these boys, these men, came in and were just dumped with all of this: "Here's this, here's that, here's this, here's that." I am not John, and I am not Travis, so I've never been put in that position. As far as what I could see with my own eyes, yeah, it was loving. I'm sure there was more to it; I just never got involved.

PLAYBOY: The show seems to suggest that John and Travis identified as straight.

SAFFERY: I don't think they were ever able to identify in general because people just assumed, "Oh, you're with Joe? You're Joe's husband? Oh, you're gay." I can tell you right now, they loved women, both of them, 100 percent, but they also went home with Joe every night. I never asked, because I don't care. You do your thing and I'll do mine. And it's not like Joe was putting handcuffs on them at the end of the night and making them go home with him. They went home to him. That's a fact, but I do know they liked women. I've seen John smile at women. Travis is the same. He's a young boy from California. He's a ladies' man.

PLAYBOY: Was Travis an animal lover? What was the appeal for him?

SAFFERY: I know he enjoyed being around the animals. He even helped with taking care of the babies; you can't say no to someone who did something like that, because that takes dedication. More important for Travis and Joe was what they got out of it. Travis was a young kid when he came to the park. When you throw a bunch of toys in front of a young kid, they'll do anything you ask. Same with John. John is young, and you throw the keys to the Mustang and here's a new four-wheeler—that's kind of the dynamic there. Again, I didn't care as long as it didn't affect animal care, and it never did.

PLAYBOY: What role did drugs play in all this?

SAFFERY: If you're asking if there were drugs on park—absolutely, man. Of course there was, but I stayed away from it. I'm not condoning that whatsoever, but it did play a role. This is real, and that's what their life was—just fun, drugs, party. Did it all over again the next day, and they were happy doing it, so it didn't bother me. Joe was as smart about it as he could be. It's the same as a rock star's lifestyle, with all the attention and all the finances. That's what they did.

PLAYBOY: There has been discussion on social media that you were misgendered by the show: A chryon identifies you as g"Kelci g'Saff' Saffery," and Rick Kirkham uses "her" in reference to you. Do you identify as part of the LGBTQ community?

SAFFERY: It's funny that it's come up, because I never thought about that. It's never been part of a conversation that I've ever had, but obviously it's out there, and it's a huge community. They've always had issues with fighting for their rights to anything. I don't want to dismiss them, but I just have never personally been a part of it. Not against it; it's just never been a part of my daily life.

I've obviously always lived as he, him and his. From the moment I was able to even be self-aware, it's never even come up, so it's literally the smallest part of this entire thing as far as concerns for me. People were saying, "They misgendered you, and they're not using your right pronouns." I genuinely didn't even see that. I was more concerned about telling my story.

PLAYBOY: Just to be specific, given the viral tweet about your identity, you don't identify as trans?

SAFFERY: Not at all. I actually had to do some research, because I'm very uneducated in that department. By definition, I am not even that, so even if I wanted to, I couldn't, because I've had zero work done. I've had nothing done. It's not something I don't want to talk about; it's just something I honestly up until this point have not.

"People were saying, 'They misgendered you.' I genuinely didn't even see that."

PLAYBOY: What is your relationship status right now?

SAFFERY: I am committed, and I have been committed, and she's wonderful. Honestly, I wouldn't have gotten through this time without her, so I'm glad she's there. It's been long-term, and it's always good to have a partner in crime, though she wasn't involved in the filming.

PLAYBOY: Have your children watched the show?

SAFFERY: So far they have not. My kids are 11, five and a teeny, tiny little baby. The oldest one has been asking to watch, and I'm not sure about it, just because there are things on there I wouldn't want any 11-year-old to see. At the same time, it's hard. This is a good parenting stumper for me, and we're still working through that. The other day we were walking through the store, and people were coming up to me and asking to take pictures. My oldest one was like, "Why? What's going on?" The more it affects them, the more I'm obviously going to have to let them into what's going on—but right now, I leave it surface-level with them.

PLAYBOY: So you now have a more traditional day job?

SAFFERY: I do. I just work at a warehouse right now, and it pays the bills. When I moved out here to Redlands, California earlier this year, I told myself, "I'm just going to start over." The reason I left Oklahoma was because, even though I left the park in 2018, it still followed me no matter where I went in that state. I just wanted to get away from it. Obviously, it's always on my mind. I miss those animals every day—every single day. It was such a big part of my life for almost 10 years. It consumed me, and I loved every second of it. But I was born and raised in Hawaii, so my only thought was, "I need to put my feet in the sand again."

PHILLIPS
66

It consumed me, and I loved every second of it. But I was born and raised in Hawaii, so my only thought was, "I need to put my feet in the sand again."

PLAYBOY: It feels appropriate that Joe was running for president in the same election that Trump won.

SAFFERY: He definitely had a Trump thing going on, so at that time it was the perfect storm as far as Joe running. It was just the best of the worst in that case. I try to avoid politics at all costs. The most political I've ever been is being in the military.

PLAYBOY: In a recent interview, the filmmakers refer to Joe as a racist. Did you deal with that in working with him?

SAFFERY: Yeah. Joe has a loud mouth. There's no denying that I've heard him say things I definitely don't agree with. When I mentioned things to him as far as "You can't say that," it made it worse. It's almost like he wants someone to tell him not to so he can go ahead and do it more. It's just a matter of standing up for what you know is right. If it's happening in front of me, which it has, it's a matter of correcting it immediately. If it's some kind of media stunt or something he's filming, the more you entice, the louder he's going to get. Joe definitely had a lot to say about a lot of people, and it wasn't always good. At the end of the day, his words are his responsibilities, and he needs to be accountable for them.

PLAYBOY: Just in talking with you, it's clear how passionate you are about animals. Some viewers expressed concern that not everyone involved with the show seemed to make the animals the top priority. Is that valid?

SAFFERY: That's the one thing the show lacked: showing how much we did on park, how much we interacted with those animals and how much we sacrificed for those animals. Some days we were working 14-, 15-hour days making sure the water was filled to the top and that there was a clean, dry, warm space for them to sleep in; during the winter, we had to go around and make sure all the temps were perfect. Then you're constantly worrying about that when you're at home, sleeping. "If I'm cold right now, then they've got to be cold right now." You were never off of taking care of animals.

With the number of employees that came through, there were some that literally came there for some money in their pocket or somewhere to stay. But at the heart of it were the diehard employees who were there 100 percent for the animals. That was something they failed to show in the documentary, and I can understand people's reactions to that. I've actually thought that myself on a daily basis: Am I doing enough? The feuds between Joe and Carole, and between Jeff Lowe and Joe, were put at the forefront of everything. The day that my mission with those animals on that park came to a screeching halt, that's when I left.

PLAYBOY: What's your take on the investigation into the plot to kill Carole Baskin that has landed Joe in prison?

SAFFERY: I heard about this entire thing while I was still on park, actually. Don't get me wrong—Joe has said "I want her dead" every day that I've known him. But it was always just in typical Joe fashion. He talks a lot. I never considered any of it to go any further than right there. When I heard about his arrest, I had already left the zoo. I was shocked, because it's like, "Holy smokes, it went that far." When I watched the documentary I realized why: They pushed for it. These people we work with

"That's the one thing the show lacked: **showing** how much we **did for** those animals."

in the animal industry obviously had a different agenda than I was aware, and I never even cared to be concerned with it. I was watching that part almost as a viewer right alongside you guys.

PLAYBOY: In a recent interview from prison, Joe said he was sorry for some of the ways he's acted. Can he be redeemed?

SAFFERY: I would hope so. The draw for me, on paper, is that Joe mentions that he built this park in honor of his late brother, and that he promised him at the end of his life that he was going to bring these animals his brother dreamed of seeing in the wild. He was going to be able to do that for other people. That's beautiful, and that was part of the draw for me—to bring this dream to so many people who otherwise wouldn't be able to experience it. Because I'm one of those people. I hope he draws back to that at least, and that he remembers why he started it in the first place.

PLAYBOY: You were asked to be involved in the legal proceedings, and you opted against it. Was that a tough decision?

SAFFERY: It was not. When I disconnected from the park, I knew I did not want to be a part of any of it, and I stand by that. I actually didn't even want to be a part of the documentary. Their exact words were "This story's going to be told with or without you, and you have a hell of a story. You should be the one to tell it." The catch there for me was, "Man, I don't want anyone telling my story. I want it to be the real story." That is why I chose to participate in the documentary, and I'm very glad I did.

PLAYBOY: The sheriff has reopened the case involving the disappearance of Carole's late husband, Don Lewis, and some leads have been coming in. How do you feel about that?

SAFFERY: Honestly, I'm glad, because he left behind two daughters. They're adults, but there are two women out there—three, actually, if you include his ex-wife—and I feel they need answers. I would want answers if my father just disappeared.

PLAYBOY: A lot of people involved with the show seem to think Carole was involved in his death. Was that on your mind while you

were working there?

SAFFERY: No. It was honestly never, ever on my mind. Carole's a very different kind of person. She's not your average Carole walking around the street. Anything is possible, honestly, but I didn't know her personally. I had one direct interaction with her, but that's about it.

PLAYBOY: Is it tough to watch yourself on TV?

SAFFERY: It was, yes. It's always different, especially when you're watching with others. It made a difference that I was able to watch it by myself. I'll be honest: It was very entertaining for me. A lot of things that came up were like, Whoa. It was surreal to watch myself be a part of that madness.

PLAYBOY: What made you decide to join Cameo?

SAFFERY: Holy smokes, it's insane to me, for one, that anyone would want me to say anything to them. These are strangers, in reality. I don't know the last time I've actually had an interaction or a conversation with a perfect stranger. And then of course it's even crazier that people are actually sending in requests. Definitely nuts to me, man.

PLAYBOY: Any memorable requests so far?

SAFFERY: One was for a five-year-old's birthday; he watched the show and is a big fan. I have a five-year-old, and don't get me wrong, he's my biggest fan, but that's my kid. The part that hit home for me was that I'm affecting the lives of people and really we have nothing in common. I have nothing in common with this little five-year-old. His favorite animal is a tiger, and that was the commonality right there. I was that five-year-old at one point. My favorite animal was a tiger, and I couldn't imagine Steve Irwin sending me a video saying, "Hey, Saff, hope you're doing well today, man." That would have been amazing.

PLAYBOY: Do you keep in touch with anyone from the zoo?

SAFFERY: I chose to disconnect. Again, it was just part of wanting to leave this behind, so when I disconnected from the park, I disconnected from the animals and the people involved. I have not spoken to any of them since I left in 2018. But I'd definitely love to hear from John Reinke again, and a couple of other people. We'll see how that goes.

PLAYBOY: Everyone is talking about who would get cast in an eventual movie version. I know you told David Spade that he'd be a good fit for Joe. Have other names come to mind?

SAFFERY: I genuinely have looked at Joe multiple times and said, "You are the living version of Joe Dirt." I don't see anybody else. There is a big height difference, though. Joe's tall, and David's not.

PLAYBOY: Any thoughts about who could really capture your essence?

SAFFERY: I'm not sure. It's tough, because I've never looked at anyone and thought I looked similar to any of them. So if you're just going based off looks—as long as they have brown skin, right? I had someone tell me that the guy from Twilight should play me.

PLAYBOY: Taylor Lautner?

SAFFERY: Taylor Lautner, that's his name. I said, g"He's got too many hands, man."

"I genuinely have looked at Joe multiple times and said, 'You are the living version of Joe Dirt.'"

PLAYMATE

ELIANA

Brasil

ARTHURST_JOHN | ARTHURSTJOHN

TAYLOR JAZZ | TAYLOR_JAZZ

PLAYMATE

Describe yourself using only 3 adjectives.
Loyal, Funny, Loving

If you can change any one thing about you, what would it be?
I wouldn't change a thing! I love myself just the way I am :)

Do you like to travel? Where is your favorite vacation destination?
One of my favorite things to do is travel. I love going back home to Brazil.

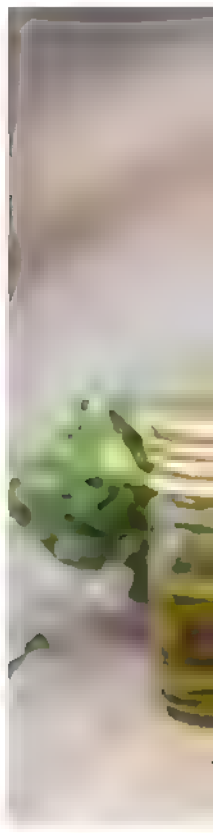
Congrats on your Playboy Australia feature! What does this mean to you?
It's a beautiful feeling. I feel joy and satisfaction

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
I see myself growing more in my business ventures and traveling the world.

A CANNABIS SKEPTIC'S GUIDE TO CBD

COURTESY **IRA_EVVA**

One of Playboy's go-to cannabis experts sifts through the over-crowded **CBD market**



I've been smoking weed every day for more than a decade to manage anxiety and depression. Plus, I love the feeling. There's no greater relief than your first inhale of great-tasting bud and the giggly relaxation that follows. So when CBD came on the scene, I was skeptical from the get-go.

What do you mean this is "high-less" cannabis? Wasn't the high the point and the medical benefits a lucky bonus? But in the age of COVID-19, when the whole world mirrors my sweat-soaked anxiety dreams, I figure it's finally time to give CBD a shot. After all, "weed lite's" most popular use is for stress, so maybe it could help us all stop clenching our jaws and imagining the end of days.

Not all CBD products are created equal, but there are a few helpful things you can do while seeking the good stuff. As you explore, remember that the CBD experience is subtler than a difficult-t0-ignore THC high

"This is definitely hard for people to wrap their heads around especially THC consumers who typically equate cannabis with an immediate 'feeling,'" Degelis "Dege" Tufts, CEO and co-founder of TribeTokes, tells me when I express my CBD skepticism. "An analogy I use to help people understand better is that you can't always 'feel' Advil; you just feel generally better." I'm intrigued; anything to help me cope with this new dystopian reality.

If you're intrigued as well, consider following these five steps toward CBD mastery.

1. Investigate third-party testing

"If you've ever spoken to someone who says CBD oil doesn't affect them, it's because they probably didn't have quality CBD oil," says Dr. Philip Blair, medical director of CBD brand Elixinol. He advises folks to check if their CBD has been tested by a third-party lab for such things as potency, pesticides, residual solvents and terpene profiles to help determine the quality of the product. Tufts of TribeTokes notes that products should have a QR code on the label that you can scan to read these results.

Kymberly "KymB" Byrnes, chief marketing officer and co-founder of TribeTokes, suggests you google the tests to ensure they're from an accredited lab. "We always say, if they can't answer your questions, you shouldn't be buying from them," she says.

So if a brand ignores your request for lab results or your queries about, for example, where the plants are grown it's likely not making high-quality stuff. Tufts reminds Playboy that hemp CBD brands are not required to lab-test their products, but the industry insists on "self-regulation" that provides consumers with the transparent and clean products they deserve.

2. Scan the ingredients

Cannabis-oil labels can appear to be filled with jargon if you don't know what you're looking at. Full spectrum, broad spectrum, isolate? Hemp-derived, cannabis-rich, phytocannabinoid.... What does any of this stuff even mean?

First, it's important to know that CBD can be sourced from either the hemp plant, which is legal around the country, or the marijuana plant, which is legal in certain states for adult and/or medical use. The main legal difference between the two is hemp has less than 0.3 percent THC (the federal limit) and marijuana has more. Otherwise, all the experts and entrepreneurs I spoke to said the difference in experience between hemp- and marijuana-derived CBD is minimal, and adding more THC into one's routine will be a matter of preference and access.

Why does this matter? Basically, experts like Blair believe the medical benefits of cannabis are dependent on much more than CBD or THC; they're a combination of the plant's 400-plus compounds, including various cannabinoids, terpenes, sugars and flavonoids. This theory is known as the "entourage effect."

When searching for the most effective medicine, it's best to opt for "full spectrum" products if they're derived from hemp—meaning none of the plant's compounds have been removed, so they can all work together in their optimal, synergetic way. Unless, says Tufts, you're drug-tested regularly; then your best bet is a CBD-isolate product, because it won't show up on a drug screening. Just keep in mind that you might need to take a higher dose for the full effect.

From there, you'll want to read the label for a few other key points: Is it organic? If it truly is, it should have the USDA Organic certification seal on it. If it's an ingestible CBD oil, you'll also want to check what kind of carrier oils are used. MCT oil (most commonly from coconut oil) and hemp-seed oil are popular and desirable choices. If you're looking for an organic product, make sure these oils are organic as well.

3 Check the dose.

Besides scanning the label for quality, check for quantity—as in,

how many milligrams does this product contain? CBD-oil labels can be tricky to read when it comes to dose. But most often, the listed milligrams, such as 700 or 1,000, are for the entire bottle, not a single serving size. And what is a decent serving size? That's kind of a mystery that takes a bit of personal trial and error to figure out. Blair recommends folks start with around 15 milligrams twice a day and see how they feel. He adds that good dosages are 30 milligrams a day for stress, 60 milligrams for immune disorders and as much as 180 milligrams for pain.

"I have a friend who takes 15 milligrams for anxiety and 30 for sleep. That's her cocktail. But mine is different," says Byrnes. "I take 50 to 70 milligrams for sleep. For anxiety I like to mix CBD and THC. Things like age, weight, underlying conditions and altitude can all make a difference. Research and experimenting are your best bet."

It can be an expensive hobby, but she's right: Experimenting with different doses and ratios of CBD to THC is the ideal way to find something that works for you. And remember: If you're shopping for CBD oil, make sure each serving size is at least 10 to 20 milligrams or you won't be able to reach effective doses without consuming half the bottle in one go.

4. Dose regularly

Unlike ingesting a THC edible, whose noticeable effects emerge an hour or so later, CBD is more of a long game when it comes to wellness enhancement, and folks report the most benefits when they take it daily. Especially in these taxing, unprecedented times, you'll likely get more stress relief if you take a reasonable dose two or three times a day rather than one big dose when you're freaking out. The effects may not be immediately noticeable, but when you look back at the week you'll likely realize it was a lot calmer and more manageable than the weeks before.

"Do you take a vitamin twice a week and expect it to make a difference?" asks Byrnes. "CBD should be integrated into your everyday lifestyle. Like an apple a day or yoga every damn day CBD is the same."

There are many theories to explain this. "Regular dosing creates subtle changes in metabolism and epigenetics and regulates the immune system," says Blair. Tufts points to Harvard Medical School's hypothesis that chronic inflammation is the "unifying theory of disease," emphasizing CBD's anti-inflammatory properties as its mechanism for promoting relief from a wide array of conditions. Regardless of how it works, staying dosed up definitely seems to help people the most, whether they're using it for stress, pain or other conditions.

5. Keep track and adjust

If you're a regular high THC-cannabis consumer like me and are struggling to figure out CBD's effects, start a journal. By keeping track of the dose and product, as well as your mood and symptoms, you can zero in on what if anything CBD is doing for you and make necessary adjustments.

"Keeping a journal is valuable because of the subtle changes you may not notice," explains Blair. "Many people often feel there are no improvements, until they stop; then they realize many things are happening."

CBD isn't a quick fix, but it can be a natural antidote to stress, sleeplessness and more serious conditions. And if there were ever a time to try weed lite, it's probably now.

"CBD should be integrated into your everyday lifestyle. Like an apple a day or yoga every damn day—CBD is the same."

on a fashion
HIGH

The ever-growing legalization of cannabis is blazing a new trend in the style industry

BY **ALLIE VOLPE**

Not long ago, cannabis fashion was limited to pot-leaf-emblazoned hoodies and "Bud"-adorned belt buckles. During the age of prohibition, when virtually all aspects of the cannabis industry operated in the shadows, luxury weed goods took a back seat to activism, science and policy change. Slowly, as one state after another legalized the herb for medical and adult use—currently, pot is legal in some capacity in 33 states—the stigma around consumption decreased and cannabis emerged as both a lifestyle and a lifestyle product.

The legal cannabis industry is expected to bring in $17 billion in overall sales this year, according to cannabis insights firm New Frontier Data—and a maturing industry breeds expansion into other markets. Labels including Edie Parker Flower, Mister Green and Sundae School, plus outlets such as Barneys' high-end Beverly Hills head shop the High End, bring luxury cannabis product lines to lifestyle-minded consumers, with a focus on aesthetics and function. By redefining how a head shop looks, and the quality of products it sells, these brands are making weed fashionable.

Pot's foray into fashion follows its rebranding from an illicit substance to a way of life. Drawing on its long-standing connection to the wellness industry—and its well-documented health benefits—brands and consumers have capitalized on the plant's ability to impact mood and experiences, broadening its usership. Companies like Dosist and LucidMood market their strains and vapes based on the desired effect. CBD has trickled into beauty products, supplements and beverages, and chefs are incorporating cannabis into their cuisines.

"This whole legal world allows for more products and more communication around products—that it's not only killer flower that people want," says Lisa Gabor, who leads the newly launched cannabis division of New York communications firm BPCM.

Like luxury watches, jewelry and cars, cannabis fashion accessories marry function and aesthetics. After Edie Parker, the handbag brand whose clutches are prized among Hollywood red-carpet walkers, launched its home goods collection in 2016, founder and creative director Brett Heyman sought to put a fashionable spin on smoking paraphernalia. The Flower line, introduced in May 2019, brings the brand's signature acrylic and hand-blown-glass materials to tabletop lighters, glass pipes, rolling trays and other practical accoutrements.

"Our products, whether it's bags or home items, are never really that utilitarian," Heyman says. "They have function, of course, but they're really art pieces that you carry around or display on your table, and we wanted to look at smoking and stash accessories in the same way."

Which isn't to say Heyman wasn't met with confusion as she developed the collection. "The roadblock was people saying, 'Oh, I'm sorry, you make those expensive bags with people's names on them and now you're making cannabis accessories,'" she says.

While views around cannabis have shifted considerably in the United States—two thirds of Americans now support legalization—some still perceive it as taboo. But according to Gabor, when any industry intersects with another, labels can breed confidence in their consumers by maintaining brand integrity.

"The roadblock was people saying, 'Oh, I'm sorry, you make those expensive bags with people's names on them and now you're making cannabis accessories."

"Years ago, when fashion brands started getting into the beauty arena, it was considered odd or weird," she says. "Then you saw how Chanel translated the concept of what Chanel stood for in fashion and quality and thoughtfulness into a beauty line with the same sensibilities. In the same way, cannabis is becoming a lifestyle product."

To Heyman, the luxury-cannabis consumer doesn't fit one mold. While longtime weed fans may have yearned for accessories and clothes from fashion brands, high-end products also usher more lifestyle-minded consumers into pot appreciation: Those who consume for health and wellness purposes may want to experiment with high-end weed accessories. Newer consumers "can now discover cannabis and find something beautiful to put it in," Heyman says, in the same way people have sought out aesthetically pleasing bar-cart fixings.

As pot continues to converge with other aspects of life—fashion, sexual pleasure, even wine—more brands will come into the fold, naturally. This diversification allows each company to focus on areas where it excels, whether that's handbags or smokewear.

"Cannabis is for our girl," Heyman says. "It's for the girl who wants to buy a bag that's a little more expensive because it's handmade by skilled artisans and it's a modern heirloom, and she's also curious about cannabis. And I can speak to her. I think as an industry grows, everybody gets to participate and you don't have to solve everybody's needs. One cannabis brand doesn't have to be for everybody."

RACHEL

michele

Rachel! What an absolute honour to have you feature! How excited were you to be in Playboy?
I was beyond excited! I have always admired the art and beauty of Playboy! I remember finding my first playboy and being in absolute awe of how beautiful and confident the women in it were. It is an absolute dream come true to be featured in my favorite magazine!

Modelling is a big part of your life, could you tell us what inspired you to start and what your journey has been like to get to this point?
I am a female fitness coach and have always preached to my clients that body positivity and embracing the skin you are in is not only important, it is empowering. At first I got into modeling because I loved how I felt in front of the camera. With every shutter of the camera my confidence and love for my body and my spirit grew! I have continued to expand my modeling career because not only is it empowering to me, but it demonstrates to my clients how important confidence and self love is.

You look incredible, what are some of your favourite ways to work out?
Back in 2014 I found a love and passion for CrossFit! Being a retired competitive gymnast having the ability to do workout combinations consisting of high intensity functional movements, gymnastics skills and weight lifting, CrossFit became my absolute favorite way to work out! The past year I have also dedicated myself to triathlon training and have found that swimming and biking are quickly becoming another one of my favorite ways to work out!

Tell us something surprising about you?
Something Surprising about me...I know how to train dogs in german commands! My 100lb German Shepherd, Kilo is completely trained in German.

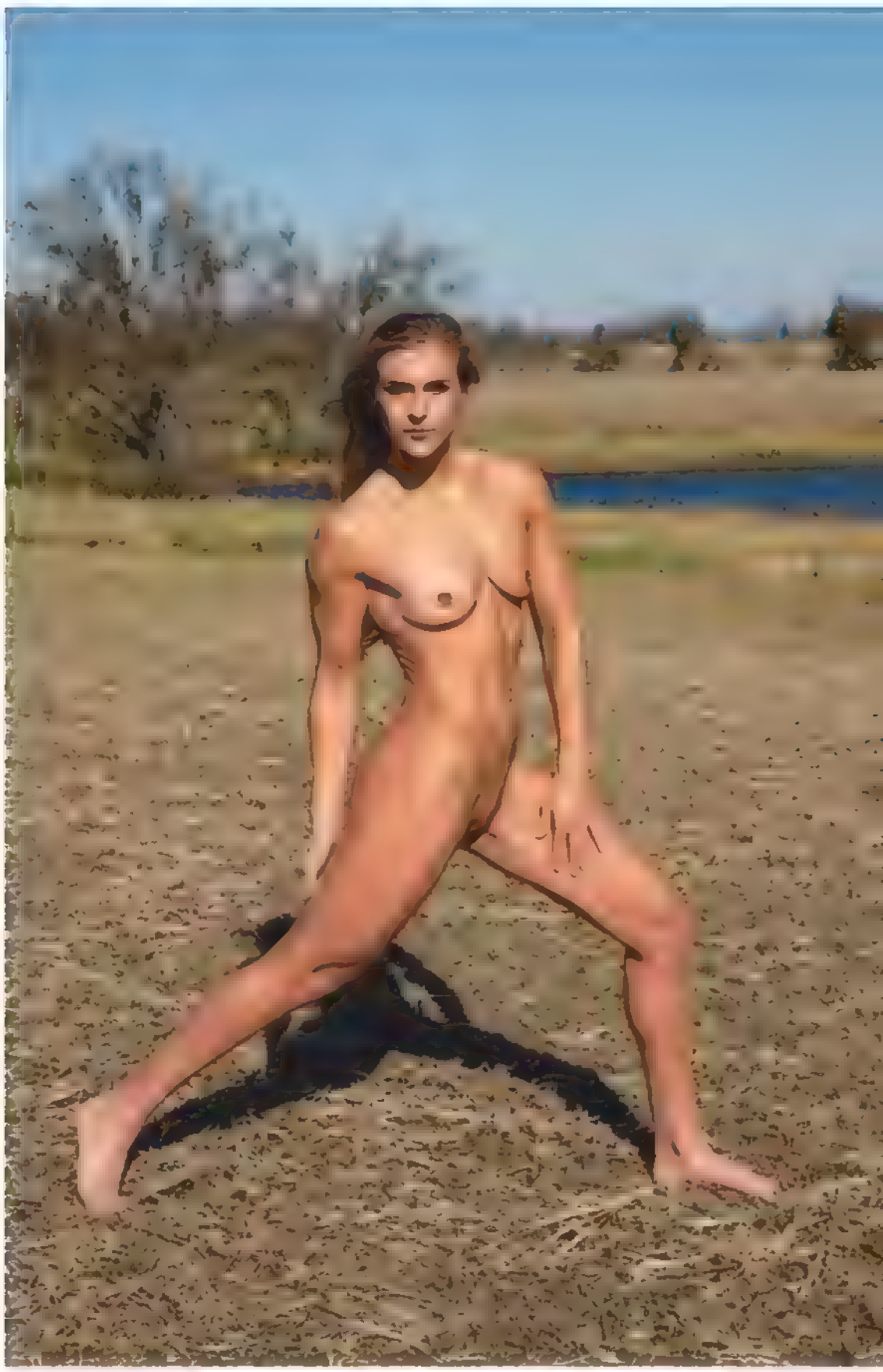
Describe yourself in one sentence?
Not your typical blonde, lift big weights, love big dogs and enjoy dark whiskey!

Turn-ons?
Confidence and Passion!

Turn-offs?
Hypocrisy and entitlement!

What makes you tick?
Grit and passion! There is something special about being passionate, but there is something truly unique about having the grit to do whatever it takes to fulfill your goals and dreams! Achieving those goals and dreams are amazing, but the journey and adventure getting there is what really makes me tick!

Thank you so much for sitting with us and letting us get to know a bit of you! Any last words for our readers out there?
You can do whatever your heart desires! Dont give up when it gets hard or seems impossible. That is the moment that you will learn and gain the most out of your hard work! Be Bold, Be Confident, Be Beautifully you!



One *Nation*, Now Divisible

From Iranian warships to sinking states—do Trump's actions foreshadow a fractured America?

BY **BRIAN KAREM**

Sometimes you can just smell a shitty day coming.

Wednesday morning, shortly before nine a.m. on the East Coast, President Donald Trump tweeted, "I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea."

The image of shooting "down" gunboats aside—unless Iran has flying vessels of which the general public is unaware—the president's latest attempt to keep us from noting that since February 29 more than 46,000 people in the United States have died of the coronavirus is not only frightening; it was inevitable.

The United States is still struggling to test its citizens for COVID-19 while some, including the president, push to reopen the country's economy as soon as possible. Trump, in his efforts to deflect and dodge, has announced it is up to governors to test citizens and decide when their individual states reopen—while he claims both total authority and absolutely no responsibility. His daily press briefings resemble a bad SNL skit with no cogent punch line, and reporters are left chasing their collective tail, trying to quantify and verify Trump's daily vomit of hate and distortion.

He continues to try to consolidate his power, using the coronavirus to become something like a diabolical comic-book villain. He'll never be more than that, because he has also seriously weakened the federal government—though few have taken notice.

Years from now, if the republic dissolves into many countries where there once was one, historians will take a long look at the regional state pacts created to deal with the coronavirus as the seeds for that outcome.

Governors in Georgia, Tennessee and South Carolina have all announced plans to ease their coronavirus lockdowns.

In the Northeast, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Massachusetts and Rhode Island have all banded together to coordinate their efforts to mitigate the virus.

Out west, California, Oregon and Washington are working together.

In the Mid-Atlantic region, Maryland is informally coordinating its response with Washington, D.C. and Virginia.

In the Midwest, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Kentucky have entered into a formal pact. Five of the governors are Democrats and two are Republicans.

Donald Trump's actions during the coronavirus pandemic shine a light on regional politics as nothing has before, with the exception of the Civil War. Competing with one another and the federal government for much-needed health resources, states have been forced to come together over Donald. Will it ultimately lead to more? Right now it seems to be a remote possibility—but until he was actually elected, most people thought Donald J. Trump as president was a remote possibility, a bad fiction or a psilocybin nightmare.

Trump's actions regarding the pandemic spawn so many questions that are left unanswered and give us so many questionable non-answers that one has to wonder if the chaos generated is part of the plan. On the other hand, it seems obvious Trump cannot see beyond the moment to take stock of what he does. Someone has to pick up the slack and deal with reality. It falls to the governors.

When again cornered this week by Jon Karl from ABC about the lack of testing, Trump claimed, "We've tested more than any other country," which is another lie. He also said the "invisible enemy came from nowhere." The virus is actually visible under a microscope and has never been invisible to scientists or health care workers who repeatedly warned the government during the past decade about a possible pandemic. But that hasn't kept Trump from spouting his nonsense and claiming the WHO failed to properly inform him about the virus. This particular lie is compounded by the fact that Trump had more than a dozen people working at the WHO.

The question I plan to ask him is this: "Mr. President, you cut funding to the WHO and said it deceived you. You had more than a dozen staffers there. They said you were informed as early as November. Are they lying, or are you?"

I do not expect an answer. I expect more deflection and lies.

Trump cannot answer the question, and he doesn't want to. That isn't him and never has been. He likes to brutalize, beat and bully anyone he can. His actions don't instill hope; they bring on despair and hopelessness. They belittle. They anger. They frustrate. That's because Trump wants to cultivate fear in order to maintain the illusion of control—and make money. He does it daily under the pretense of informing the public during his de facto mini-rallies in the briefing room.

If you add up everything said after the introductory remarks in these briefings, you could boil it down to one or two sentences. The rest is all show—and as long as he can look at the overnight ratings (which he does) and tweet out how proud he is of the numbers he's

getting (which he also does), then it matters little to Trump what the outcome is beyond the immediate gratification of knowing he drew a large audience. Facts? The fact is Trump thinks he's a reality-show hit.

"I've had great 'ratings' my whole life, there's nothing unusual about that for me. The White House News Conference ratings are 'through the roof' (Monday Night Football, Bachelor Finale, @ nytimes) but I don't care about that. I care about going around the Fake News to the PEOPLE!" Trump tweeted on April 21.

You cannot solve social issues in such a fashion, but you might be able to make money from them. Thus Trump's hotels are asking the Trump government for bailout money. Any bets on whether they get it? To further cover his tracks, the president apparently encouraged armed insurrection against legitimate governments in three states: He wanted to "liberate" states that were ignoring the COVID-19 safety guidelines the Trump government suggested and endorsed.

Tuesday he continued his support for those protesters in several states who want the country to reopen for business sooner rather than later. During that day's circus Trump said he was with the protesters in spirit and the "groups I've seen have been very much spread out" and respecting social-distancing standards They aren't, and thousands of photographs demonstrate that point.

Imagine any other president in a press briefing first recommending a nationwide course of action during a crisis, then tweeting out contrary advice to his "base" and encouraging protests against the action his own government had recommended. You'd call such a person many things, including immoral, insane and moronic. But you wouldn't call such a man unifying. Few would call such a man a leader.

Trump is definitely not a leader. He certainly isn't a decent man and he is no statesman. But he is tearing the country apart.

Still, the endgame is not yet in sight, and Trump's actions may well be just a speed bump in the history of the United States. The November election could decide that.

But with no coherent national strategy and Trump's decision to delegate the responsibility for testing, those states that have extensive health care resources have a leg-up on other states that do not. Making every state responsible for itself not only weakens the federal government; it weakens our ability to battle the virus as it pits state against state. Things are so bad in Maryland that Governor Larry Hogan recently had to make a deal with suppliers in South Korea just to get tests our federal government promised us and lied about weeks ago.

On Tuesday CDC director Robert Redfield threw down a chilling prediction. "There's a possibility that the assault of the virus on our nation next winter will actually be even more difficult than the one we just went through," he told The Washington Post.

Trump is apparently determined to make it more difficult. As the Post also noted, a group called Convention of States is behind some protests against state lockdowns: "The Convention of States project launched in 2015 with a high-dollar donation from the family foundation of Robert Mercer, a billionaire hedge fund manager and Republican patron. It boasts past support from two members of the Trump administration—Ken Cuccinelli, acting director of U S Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Ben Carson, secretary of housing and urban development."

Donald Trump's actions during the coronavirus pandemic shine a light on regional politics as nothing has before, with the exception of the Civil War.

A house divided against itself cannot stand, and it is more difficult to keep it standing when you're actively supporting its destruction and looting its coffers.

This is not a surprise. From the beginning, when Steve "I want to tear it all down" Bannon was on the Trump train, the goal of the administration has been to destroy existing norms and lay low the federal government. The coronavirus has given Trump more fuel to burn it to the ground.

We are at a tipping point, a fork in the road and any other cliché you wish to spout about perilous times—for we remain fractured as never before. There is no denying it.

Trump is responsible for it. He actively encourages it.

The question remains: Do we?

The Best New GAMES TO PLAY DURING THE QUARANTINE

BY **GIL MACIAS**

With social distancing in full force, these five titles will help you take a much-needed break from reality

It's no surprise there's been a surge in video game purchases and downloads since COVID-19 reared its ugly head. According to Bloomberg, Italy saw a massive two-thirds data spike through its main telecom networks in the early half of March, and it seems bandwidth-hogging online multiplayer games such as Fortnite and Call of Duty were behind that surge.

Speaking of Call of Duty, a March 13 tweet from its official account revealed that Warzone, a free-to-play battle royale spin-off, reached a record-breaking 15 million players in just three days following its March 10 release. (The previous record was held by Apex Legends, which saw 10 million users in three days back in February 2019.) That's huge, but not a total surprise considering the circumstances.

Hours of button-mashing can help you pass the time and take your mind off the woes we're all facing. Thankfully, there has been a huge variety of notable video game releases during the pandemic, with two major drops coming this week.

Here then are five games you should check out during the #StayHome lockdown.

DOOM ETERNAL

Kill time by slaying fiendish hordes in DOOM Eternal, the hyperkinetic follow-up to 2016's DOOM reboot. In this highly anticipated sequel, Earth has been invaded by hell's armies, and as the lead hero known as the DOOM Slayer, you must navigate numerous demon-infested terrains and annihilate the fiends with your over-the-top arsenal. Run out of ammo? No problem; "rip and tear" them with your signature chain saw. Just don't run out of fuel.

Fast-paced and with insane graphics, super-cool level and character design, gargantuan bosses and a wicked industrial soundtrack, this action–sci-fi–horror first-person shooter is a gorehound gamer's delight. Even after you complete the single-player campaign, more hours of fun can be had with your friends in the new online multiplayer battle mode.

NIOH 2

If you're an advanced gamer looking for a challenge that involves more than just shooting and blowing things up, look no further than Nioh 2. In this brutal and beautiful action-fantasy role-playing game, you're teleported back to a fantastical version of Japan's turbulent Sengoku period of the late 1500s, filled with samurai, supernatural warriors and mythological creatures. You even get to choose spirit animals that add unnatural powers to your character.

Thanks to Nioh 2's insanely detailed character creator, you can choose your gender, hairstyle, muscle tone, bone structure, voice pitch, tattoos, scars, skin tone, makeup and a lot more—adding a personal stamp that makes your character feel like your own. Much like FromSoftware's challenging Dark Souls games, it also allows you to summon other players online when the going gets tough—and it will get tough. Many of Nioh 2's merciless bosses will beat you into submission, which adds to the glow of gratification if you manage to take them down on your own.

DARKSIDERS: GENESIS

For this prequel to the Darksiders trilogy, it seems the creators of this action-fantasy-adventure franchise decided to go in a new direction. Taking inspiration from Blizzard's Diablo series, Darksiders: Genesis introduces a bird's-eye-view gameplay style, and it works beautifully. You take on the role of the brutish sword-wielding War and set off with your wisecracking, gun-toting brother Strife. You're both Nephilim (half angel, half demon)—oh, and you're two of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. You'll navigate various realms and take down your enemies and bosses with swords, guns and sorcery while investigating the deceptive demon-king Lucifer.

But this is no mere hack-and-slack adventure game. Along the way you'll encounter puzzles, labyrinthine pathways, challenging gauntlets and epic arena battles. You'll also use looted souls to upgrade weaponry and gain new abilities that may encourage you to re-explore previous areas and access blocked pathways and hidden treasures. Plus, you have the option of two-player cooperative mode—a first in this franchise. What makes this game so charming, though, is its likable villains, rich mythology and colorful dialogue between the two leads.

RESIDENT EVIL 3

Much like last year's Resident Evil 2 remake, Resident Evil 3 is back with a major makeover featuring spectacular up-to-date graphics and gameplay. In this third-person survival-horror shooter, citizens of Raccoon City are dealing with a pandemic of their own—one caused by a "cannibal virus" that turns people into zombies. As in the 1999 original, you play as S.T.A.R.S. special forces officer Jill Valentine. As you attempt to escape the city and its legions of the undead, you're ruthlessly pursued by Nemesis, a hulking, unstoppable bioweapon created and dispatched by the evil Umbrella Corporation.

Your anxiety level will go through the roof when Nemesis jumps out of nowhere and starts chasing you; your only option is to run like hell. There are jump scares aplenty, and you'll often catch yourself sighing with relief when you reach a safe zone. It's truly like being in a horror movie. Bonus: Resident Evil 3 comes with Resident Evil Resistance, a thrilling online multiplayer survival-horror experience that feels a lot like being in an escape room.

FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE

After 15 years of teasing and five years of official development, the long-awaited reimagining of 1997's Final Fantasy VII, arguably the best of the Final Fantasy franchise and maybe even the best role-playing game of all time, has finally arrived. From its cinematic opening sequence to the moment the iconic characters all appear onscreen, it's clear a lot of love, blood, sweat and tears went into this project.

The setting is the sprawling cyberpunk city of Midgar. You play as Cloud Strife, a mercenary who aids the eco-terrorist group Avalanche in taking down the sinister Shinra Electric Power Company. Loaded with hours of main-story missions and optional side quests, the game lets you exterminate creatures, collect rewards, blaze through motorcycle chases, wage chaotic boss battles and simply sit back and enjoy the dialogue and scenery in extensive cinematic sequences. You can even play darts and listen to a jukebox at a pub or engage in a round of Whack-a-Box with kids in the slum district.

This update has a new real-time combat system, and you get to switch and take control of various supporting characters who accompany you on your missions. They all have unique abilities (bare-knuckle brawling, magic powers, a knack for high-tech weaponry) and also provide lively banter along your journey. This ambitious remake is only a fraction of the original multidisc game; the rest will be released episodically. No word on when the other installments will surface, but they'll certainly be worth the wait.

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